

“Why Sex Matters” // 1 Corinthians 6:9–20 // *Cutting Through the Noise # 5*

1 Corinthians 6, if you have your Bible.¹

Welcome to all campuses. We are one church that meets at 12 locations. From N Durham to Garner to Summit en Espanol, to our brothers and sisters in Prisons--welcome them? And everywhere in between...

Today is exciting for two reasons: First, because today, at the end of our service, I am going to invite all kinds of people, at all of our campuses, to proclaim their faith by baptism. I believe you all saw some sort of baptism just a moment ago, and that's just a glimpse of what we're praying the Lord does over the next two weeks here, beginning this very day.

I know some of you weren't expecting that when you came to church today--for some, the thought had not even crossed your mind—but ain't that just like our God? Usually, the biggest stuff he did in my life I wasn't really looking for.

I'll tell you more about that at the end of my message, but if you've never gone public with your faith through baptism, I believe today is the day to take the first step forward.

The second reason today is exciting is because, while we've had two challenging weeks talking about sin and confrontation other tough things, this weekend we get to have a nice and easy chat about **why sex matters**. **It's like a cupcake week.**

When I served as a student pastor, one of my favorite group games was this one where you'd create this small, indoor obstacle course, and then you'd divide everyone into two teams, each team would choose a student, blindfold them and have them try to work their way through a small obstacle course. The blindfolded person got to choose one person from their team to stand at the end and call out instructions for them: "OK, turn left, now, duck and take 2 steps forward, step over the tire, walk carefully over the broken glass," etc. The trick was that everyone on the other team also got to stand around the side shouting out counter-instructions. It's actually a lot harder than it sounds--you'd think you'd recognize the voice of your friend well enough that you could pick theirs out of the mix--but it was incredibly difficult to cut through all the noise and hear the counsel you needed. (I'm pretty sure a few of the kids ended up in the emergency room, but thankfully everyone was less litigious back then.)

¹ Works Consulted: Timothy Keller, "Sexuality," sermon preached at Redeemer Presbyterian Church on May 11, 1997; Tim Keller, *Meaning of Marriage*; David Platt, "Beauty and Brokenness: Sexuality (Part 1)," sermon preached at McLean Bible Church on February 7, 2021; Andrew Wilson, *1 Corinthians For You: Thrilling You With How Grace Changes Lives*, The Good Book Company; John Mark Comer, "First Corinthians: Plato + The Prostitutes," sermon preached at Bridgetown Church on February 13, 2011; Andy Stanley, "Designer Sex," from "The New Rules of Love, Sex and Dating," Joe McIlhenny and Freda McKissic Bush, *Hooked: New Science on How Casual Sex Is Affecting Our Children*.

We've called our study through 1 Corinthians "cutting through the noise" because Paul takes a number of issues the Corinthians are dealing with and shows them how the gospel is the voice that can guide them through the chaos.²

In part 1 of the letter (chapters 1–4), Paul dealt with the problem of divisions in the church; in part 2, the questions relate to **sex, marriage and singleness**. A couple of weeks ago we stuck our toe in these waters; this week we're going to jump into the deep end. And so now is probably a good time to say that if you aren't signed up to receive our emails, and you weren't paying attention earlier in the service, this would be a good time to *run, not walk, run*, to the lobby of your campus where a friendly representative of our family ministries team will show you how to take advantage of our **awesome kids' ministry opportunities** we have this hour (and every weekend). (To note: if your kids is 13 and above they should be fine, btw: in fact, there are probably a few things they can help you understand today)

1 Cor 6: Corinth was a highly sexualized society. **Sexual promiscuity was so common in Corinth that "corinthianize"** had become a verb – "to corinthianize something" meant to make it sexually deviant. Corinth had over 1000 prostitutes--and that was for a city about 1/20th the size of Raleigh! It worked out to about 1 of every 30 people you saw walking around in Corinth was a prostitute! 1 of 30!

Whenever people become Christians they bring a lot of their cultural baggage into the church--that's just how it works, so it's no surprise that the church in Corinth dealt with sexual issues. (BTW, quick timeout here--let that be an encouragement to some of you! You feel a little 'off' being in church because of a sexual past, like if people found out they wouldn't want you here. Be encouraged--Jesus' original band of disciples included a number of people with sexually promiscuous pasts, and the first churches his Spirit planted were filled with people with sexual issues.)!

But it was pretty bad in Corinth. Some in the church were even saying that to visit the occasional prostitute was not that big of a big deal. "After all," they said, "it's just biology, right? I mean, when you're hungry, you eat. Then you feel better. It's natural. It works the same way when you want to have sex--you have it and then you feel better. It's just natural; it's just how God made us."

So in 1 Cor 6, Paul wants to show them that there is a spiritual dimension to sex because God made us a-- (here's your nerdy word for the week)--a psychosomatic unity. It means that our soul (psycho) and body (soma) are one; you can't neatly separate one from the other. Yes, it's true that when our body dies, our soul goes on to be with Jesus, and it is disembodied for a while, but that's not the way our soul was created to be, and so when we're in that state, Scripture says that we're uncomfortable, "longing to be clothed" with our resurrected bodies.³ Our soul is created to be united to a body. And thus, Paul is going to argue, because our bodies and souls are one, sex is far from meaningless. Sex has an extremely spiritual dimension to it, and God cares a lot about it--in fact, our sexuality is an important part of his plan in our lives, even for knowing him.

² Some of these issues, he says, he's heard about from Chloe (1:11), others are questions the Corinthians sent to him in a letter.

³ 2 Cor 5:1–5.

So, let's start in vs. 9, "Don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom? Do not be deceived: No *sexually immoral people*, idolaters, *adulterers, or males who have sex with males*, no thieves, greedy people, drunkards, verbally abusive people, or swindlers will inherit God's kingdom." Sexual sin is not the only sin he mentions in that list, but note how many times he brings it up.

Verse 12 "Everything is permissible for me," but not everything is beneficial. Now, notice the quotes around that phrase, "Everything is permissible." To make sense of this passage, you have to understand what Paul is doing: he's quoting some of the popular slogans of the day and then rebutting them. It's kind of like if I were to say to you, "What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas," that doesn't mean I approve of that statement. I'm just highlighting a horrible phrase in our culture and then I'll offer an alternative. *It's like me saying, "What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas, but the regrets and sometimes venereal diseases stay with you forever."*

People sometimes see these phrases in quotes and think Paul is affirming what's in the quote. It's actually the opposite. He's contradicting it. "Everything is permissible for me," the statement goes, but (Paul responds) not everything is beneficial.

- Some of the Christians in Corinth were saying "Hey, we've been freed from the law and now we can do whatever we want!" Paul says, "Your freedom from the law was to love God and love others. Are casual, open sexual relationships loving, and beneficial, for either you or your neighbor?"

Paul continues, "Everything is permissible for me," but (Paul counters) I will not be mastered by anything. Being freed from the law does not mean just giving myself over to sinful desires. You're trying to tell me that just because my body desires something, that makes it right? That's crazy talk. If my body says, "Eat a dozen donuts," that doesn't always mean it's the right decision. If my body feels like violently raging at the person who cut me off in traffic, I shouldn't obey that. Scripture tells me what is right. My mind and reason tells me what is right, not my bodily urges.

Paul continues with another Corinthian slogan: 13 "Food is for the stomach and the stomach for food," and God will do away with both of them. Unfortunately, the CSB ends the quotation after "food," but I think that's wrong. This whole statement is what Corinthians would say. What it meant was this: "Food is for the stomach and the stomach for food--when you're hungry, you eat. And that's all that's happening with sex. Your body has a desire and you satisfy it." "And God will do away with both of them" was the idea that God is mostly unconcerned with the physical body. All God cares about is the spirit. One day, he's going to do away with the physical body and all that will be left is spirit. So what you do with your physical body is not that big of a deal. The place you know and love God is in your heart. Now, the ghost of Plato is all over that. That's something called Platonic dualism--the belief that the physical body is basically worthless and only the spirit matters. Plato was a huge figure in ancient Greece--not far from Corinth--and his ideas were a major influence in this part of the world.

But the Bible never teaches that "God is going to just do away with the body one day." Scripture always talks about our bodies in terms of resurrection and redemption, never just discarding.

So, the Corinthian lie about sex has two parts:

A. Sex is just physical--it's like any other biological need; and

B. What you do with your body has no bearing on your soul.

Before we get to Paul's answer, let's ask: Do people still believe versions of this lie today? Uh, yeah. It sounds like this:

- "Casual sex between consenting adults doesn't hurt anybody." "We just had some fun for a while. We were both lonely. No big deal. There were no strings attached." "It was just a little harmless affair to break up the monotony--we both agreed; it was nothing serious." Or like Katy Perry said in one of her songs, "I don't even know your name, it doesn't matter. You're my experimental game, it's just human nature." (And I know some of you are asking, 'How is he up on the latest Katy Perry songs?' While others of you are like, 'Um, that song is literally 13 years old. My kids consider Katy Perry in the genre of Classic Rock.' When I want to pull examples of song lyrics, I naturally think RUNDMC and REO Speedwagon. So at least appreciate my attempts to get within this millennium.)
- Or, Woody Allen: "I know sex without love is an empty experience, but as empty experiences go, it's one of the best." IOW, it's just physical. It's just biology. Or to reach way back to the Bloodhound Gang... People in Corinth would have loved that song.
- Or here's another variation of the Corinthian lie: "I should be able to love whomever I want. God doesn't care about who you should have sex with. Love is love. Just figure out what works for you. What God really cares about is that you are a good, honest person, that you love people, and that you are happy." That's another way of saying: the physical design doesn't matter; only the spirit matters.

So, yes, the Corinthian lie about sex is alive and well in the world today. So, vs. 13, Paul counters: 13 However, the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 14 God raised up the Lord (Jesus) and will also raise us up by his power. That's a direct refutation of Platonic dualism.

15 Don't you know that your bodies are a part of Christ's body? So should I take a part of Christ's body and make it part of a prostitute? Absolutely not! 16 Don't you know that anyone joined to a prostitute is one body with her? For Scripture says, The two will become one flesh. 17 But anyone joined to the Lord is one spirit with him. If nothing more, read that as saying there is an extremely spiritual dimension to sex! You can't have sex with someone and not become one flesh with them, and because you have Christ in your heart, you are actually making Christ one with that prostitute.

So, he says, 18 Flee sexual immorality! Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the person who is sexually immoral sins against his own body. 19 Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body.

Paul's answer to the Corinthian lie: **Sex is not just biology; there's something deeply spiritual about it.**

Before we unpack Paul’s reasoning, could we just take a moment and acknowledge that we all know this is true?

Ask yourself, honestly⁴:

- ***If sex is JUST physical, why is rape so much more psychologically damaging than other forms of physical violence?*** The National Domestic Violence center says both men and women are much less likely to report rape than other forms of physical abuse because there is a shame and trauma attached to rape that makes it difficult to talk about even when you’re only the victim.
- ***Or, if sex is JUST physical, why is it that when a child experiences sexual abuse, it can be so difficult to shake off, even after becoming an adult?*** It’s not just that “an authority figure let me down.” No, it’s deeper than that.
- ***Or, if sex is just physical, why is adultery so hard to get over? If sex is JUST physical why is that one sin so hard to forgive and forget?***
- ***Or, one more: If sex is just physical, why is it that many people’s deepest regrets are sexual?*** When somebody comes to me and says, “Pastor, I need to talk to somebody, and I’ve never told anyone this before,” I know what it’s going to be about. It’s not usually “I cheated on this test.” Or, “I haven’t paid my taxes.” It’s almost always about some sexual regret that hangs over them like a dark cloud that they can’t shake off.

Do you see what I’m getting at? If sex is just physical, none of those things would be true. I read an article in this month’s Atlantic magazine, by a feminist writer named Helen Lewis. It had a jarring title, “Where Is Our Paradise of Guilt-Free Sex?”⁵ I thought, “Well, I’ve got to read that. Where is it indeed?” Lewis, again, a feminist, wrestles with the false promises of the sexual revolution. She notes that the sexual revolution was *supposed to* make sex better for everyone (especially women) by making it mainly a matter of preference. But she reports that every study shows that since the sexual revolution of the 60’s sex has become *worse* for women—it makes them *more* open to abuse, *more* filled with dissatisfaction and guilt and regret—and not just because they have their, religious past making them feel guilty. It’s that way for unchurched, or atheist women, too.

Why? She asks. Her conclusion? Sex is not just individual preference. There are all kinds of ramifications that come from these choices.

Paul would read that and clear his throat and say, “Hmm-hmm. Like I was saying: Sex has a very spiritual component to it and we all know that.” There’s something about sex that touches our deepest selves.

Here’s why, Paul says (and here’s your theology lesson)

⁴ Andy Stanley, “Designer Sex,” from “The New Rules of Love, Sex and Dating”

⁵ <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2021/10/feminism-sex-clark-flory-srinivasan-angel/619822/>. That’s the title in the print version. The online version goes by the title, “The Problem With Being Cool About Sex.” Accessed October 5, 2021.

1. God created the body to mirror the soul (vv. 16–17)

- You can't do something with your body and not your soul. See vs. 16 Don't you know that anyone joined to a prostitute is one body with her? For Scripture says, The two will become one flesh. 17 But anyone joined to the Lord is one spirit with him... 16 So should I take a part of Christ's body and make it part of a prostitute?
 - **Again, notice how Paul goes back and forth between the spiritual and physical oneness in these verses.** When you have sex, you become 'one body' with the person you have sex with. It's **impossible to have sex and this not happen** on some level.
 - **Notice that Paul uses for his illustration the cheapest kind of sex** imaginable: Sex with a prostitute--if there were ever sex that was "just physical," it would be that. Think about it: it's **with a stranger**. It involves no commitment. You'll likely never see each other again. Yet Paul says that **even in that 30-min encounter there is a soul joining**.

2. Christ died to redeem our bodies, too, he says (vv. 13, 14)

- Vs. 14 God raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. Christ didn't just die to pay the guilt for your sins, he resurrected in a physical body to redeem your body. Thus, 13 ...the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.
- It's not "the stomach for food and food for the stomach," it's all of it for Jesus now. Whatever Jesus purchased with his blood he should have Lordship over. And that includes your body. "Body" is used 8x in this passage. All of it is for Jesus now. *Which leads to #3...*

3. God designed sex to re-enact the most intimate parts of our relationship with him (vs. 15–16)

- God designed the physical parts of sex to mirror our relationship with him. The quote in vs 16 For Scripture says, "The two will become one flesh" is from Gen 2, and Paul in another place explains that this dimension of marriage points to a mystery of how God relates to us: "31 ...and the two will become one flesh. 32 This mystery is profound, but I am talking about Christ and the church."
- The whole marriage covenant and sexual relationship re-enacts Christ's relationship with the church. Think about all the ways:
 - **When you make a covenant in marriage, it's just like the salvation covenant.** You stand at an altar and unite all of yourself to all of them, forever--all that is yours becomes hers, the good and bad; all that was hers, the good and the bad, becomes yours. The wife then takes on a new family name; you exchange rings, celebrate with a meal, and then have sex as the physical seal of our commitment, out of which God often brings forth new life. Each one of those steps illustrates the gospel. In salvation you go to the altar, so to speak, to say "I do" to Jesus Christ. (He said "I do" to you 2000 years ago on a cross and has been standing there waiting on you ever since.) And in that moment that you say "I do," all that was yours became his and all that was his became yours. What was yours? Shame, sin and condemnation, which he gladly took on the cross. He was bearing your sin and shame. And what was his that became yours? Righteousness, eternal life, an eternal inheritance with God. All that became yours. You took on a new family name. Your exchange of rings was called baptism. We celebrate that union with a meal called communion. At your salvation Jesus put his Holy Spirit into you, out of which

God brings forth new life in us and through us. Do you see it? Each step of the marriage preaches the gospel.

- **The act of sex itself is a demonstration of the love of God.** In sex, you open yourself up completely to another person. Psychologists say that the deepest desire of the human heart is to be known and loved... It's why sex feels beautiful. It's a pointer to God's love of you.
- **Even the complementary nature of sex—two different genders, male and female**—is a picture of our relationship to God. When God created the world, he used opposite pairs again and again to produce “the good”—day and night, sun and moon, land and sea, earth and heaven—and on his ultimate day of creation, male and female.⁶ All of this sets up our salvation, where Christ comes together with the church. It's two things that are alike but different. Same sex marriage destroys that picture, btw. Marriage is supposed to be the union of two things which are alike, but different--complementary.

The point: Every part of marriage and sex illustrates the love and nature of God. So, far from being merely the satisfaction of a bodily desire, sexuality is central to our humanity and central to our knowledge of God.

So, what then is Paul's conclusion? 18 Flee sexual immorality! Run away from it. Why? 18 Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the person who is sexually immoral sins against his own body.

When you sin sexually, you sin against 3 things:

- **You sin against God.** You reject his design and turn what he intended to be an act of worship and self-giving love to others into a selfish satisfaction of your lusts.
- **You sin against the person you are having sex with,** because you reduce them to an object to satisfy your physical desires.
 - These Corinthian men were treating these prostitute women like disposable objects. When they compared sex to food, “Hey, you get hungry, you eat,” they were basically saying these women mean little more to me than an afternoon snack. You consume it and then you move on. What do you do after you eat a Snickers Bar? You throw away the wrapper. These men don't see these women as image bearers; they're something you can drive-thru, purchase, consume, and leave. To quote Andrew Wilson, “The prostitute is no more than food for a hungry man or a toilet in which to relieve himself.”⁷ I know that is gross, but that is basically what you are doing. She's just an object to satisfy your desires. Reducing her to an object is a sin against her.
- **So, it's a sin against God; it's a sin against whomever you are having sex with. Finally, it's a sin against yourself.** Sex is so integrated into our souls that what we do with our bodies deeply affects our souls. Other sins primarily hurt others, Paul says, but sexual sin destroys you.
 - There is a *connectivity* to sex. Notice the word “join.” The one who has sex with a prostitute “joins” himself to her spiritually.
 - The easiest analogy I've heard of this is putting duct tape around your arm... it loses its connectivity.

⁶ Andrew Wilson, *1 Corinthians for You*, 66–67.

⁷ Ibid.

Being sexually involved with someone you are not married to creates connectedness that is hard to undo: I thought this passage from **Tim Keller's** *The Meaning of Marriage* captured it well:

“Even if you are not legally married, (when you are having sex with someone) you may find yourself very quickly feeling marriage-like ties, feeling that the other person has obligations to you. But the other person has no legal, social, or moral responsibility even to call you back in the morning. This incongruity leads to jealousy and hurt feelings and obsessiveness if two people are having sex but are not married. It makes breaking up vastly harder than it should be. It leads many people to stay trapped in relationships that are not good because of a feeling of having (somehow) connected themselves.”⁸

(First, Isn't that like the plotline of every episode of *Friends* you've ever seen?). Second: the point it is impossible to have sex and not engage the spiritual dimensions. God simply didn't create you that way.

Many people feel like **Christians are anti-sex**. Like we don't appreciate its goodness enough. **On the contrary**--we understand that the limitations God gives are BECAUSE of its power. **It's like Tim Keller says -** *“Sex outside of marriage is not a sin because it is so bad, but because it's so good.”*

Our culture says, “Sex is no big deal. I see your body, I want it, so I'll just take it. What's your name again? In the words of Ariana Grande, "I see it. I like it. I want it. I got it." (Hey... That's a song from 2019!) Our culture's attitude is basically, “We've been dating for 4 months now, I've earned the right to use you now like an object. I'll leave you in another 2–3 months when I'm bored with your body and I'll get a new one because by then I'll start having to deal with you as a human. And that's not what I'm interested in.”

Church, we have to say: No, that person is more than an object. Stop. Covenant with them. Cherish them. You DARE not use their body without covenanting with their soul. You dare not. Because you are sinning against God, against her or him, and tragically, also yourself.⁹

So, flee sexual sin. Other temptations God tells us to endure or withstand. But when it comes to sexual immorality, he tells us to *flee*. “Don't even put yourself in a tempting position.” Don't be over at his apartment late at night by yourselves. What do you think is going to happen? In dating, set yourselves really clear boundaries and don't go beyond them. In my youth group, my dad was one of our leaders, and he always gave us Lynn's laws (nothing below the neck, nothing in the dark, nothing should last longer than 5 seconds, never lie down). Designed to keep us away from temptation.

- Martin Luther, “If your head is made of butter, stay away from the fire.” Sexually, we're all made of butter. So, flee.

So, flee...

⁸ Tim Keller, *Meaning of Marriage*, p. 226

⁹ John Mark Comer

Flee pornography

Y'all, our city may not have 30,000 prostitutes, but we have 10's of 1000's of pornographic websites accessible at our fingertips. Did you know: Porn traffic on the web every day is more than the traffic of **Amazon, Netflix, and Twitter** combined. The **porn industry** in our country takes in more money than Major League Baseball, the NBA, and the NFL, combined.

- Recent studies show that 40 million Americans are “regular” visitors to porn sites. And, get this: **1/3 are women**. It's totally a myth that this is only a male problem.
- But it's true, men and boys seem to have a particularly difficult time with it. 70% of men ages 18-24 visit a porn site every month. 70%! That means a solid majority of our young men have a habit of objectifying the human body.¹⁰

Most people think of looking at porn as not that big of a problem; it's a victimless crime--what are you really hurting, just looking at a picture? But first of all, men, you realize that perfectly airbrushed woman you are gazing at is the result of eating disorders, heavy editing, and likely, a horrible life of abuse--based on the stats--she's likely a victim of sex trafficking. So, I hardly think it's victimless.

But beyond that, the victim in that sin, like Paul says, is you and your future spouse. Like other forms of sexual immorality, porn rewires your brain in fundamental ways.

- **When you gaze at a pornographic image, you** are looking at an image of a woman whose body you just want to use to satisfy a lust, and that **trains your mind to see women a certain way**, and that starts to affect how you see all women. When you look at pictures that reduce women to objects, you start to see the real women in your life as objects.
- **Furthermore, when porn rewires your brain to see sex as just the satisfaction of a biological urge**, that significantly damages your ability to engage in a whole-being-loving-union with someone when you get married. Men, for example, you've been looking at porn and then get married, and for a while, your life is like own personal LIVE porn, but if your mind is rewired to think of sex as just bodily satisfaction, soon you get bored with her, and you need new porn, so you turn to porn or adultery or prostitution to give you that hit. Porn rewired your brain to think a certain way, and those feelings are the result of that.

18 Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the person who is sexually immoral sins against his own body.

- **No person has ever gorged himself on porn and then put it behind him after marriage because their spouse met all their porn fantasies. Instead, the opposite happens.** Porn retrains your appetites to crave more of that.
- This is **nothing to play around with**. One psychiatrist said, **“Porn is more enslaving to people than heroin.”** And **what's scary is that the porn industry** markets itself to 12–13 year olds. They know it only takes 3 days to be an addict. Can I just say, *Parents, if you let your kids have phones in their rooms and you have no filter on your internet, I have to think you're not being wise.* You might as well give them a loaded gun they can

¹⁰ JMC

put under their pillow. I'm not trying to judge you or tell you how to parent your kids, I'm just telling you to wake up to what is happening. **My family uses a service called *Covenant Eyes***

I directed a lot of this issue toward men, but in our society it has become just as much one for women.

Images. **And let me go ahead and say it:** Romance novels function like pornography for women. They are **not romantic or harmless fantasy**; they RUIN marriages and are destroying you. The *Fifty Shades of Grey* erotica series, sold more than 100 million copies worldwide. **Flee that stuff.** He can't be a poetry-writing vampire who loves you. That guy is not real. Flee it.

Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his or her own body.

Flee temptation

Take radical measures to separate yourself from it. I love what JMC says (who will be with us next week)--

- **Flee. That means get *Covenant Eyes*.** Or get rid of your computer for a while. I know of one college student in our church who gave his computer to a friend for a month and went to the library. It was a dramatic step and terribly inconvenient but he had to break the habit. Do it. Jesus is worth it.
- **Flee.** Do NOT go to her apartment. Don't put yourself in a situation where you are going to make stupid decisions. And if you are afraid of being somewhere where you'll be tempted, ask someone to hold you accountable. I was going to be somewhere one time where I thought this might be a possibility, and I told a friend, Ask me HERE. And then ask me if I was lying.

Flee. Flee. Flee sexual immorality. How? Not by trying harder. Not by willpower. By fleeing to Christ.

- **19 Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body.**
- Two things Paul points to: the blood of Jesus. He purchased you from your sin. He died for all the ways you are messed up. And that means he deserves your sexual purity, and he'll give you the ability to live in it.
- Which leads to the 2nd thing he points to: the Holy Spirit. You may feel like you don't have the strength to overcome this, and you're probably right. But Christ in you does. "It is not by might, not by power, but my Spirit" says the Lord. Greater is he that is in me than he that is in the world. I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

So, flee to Jesus. And I know some of you are sitting there thinking, "Well, it's too late now. I've already got a sexual rap sheet a mile long." I skipped the best part of this passage. Go back to vs. 9 where we started:

9 Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral... nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men... 11 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.

When you accept Christ:

- He washes you, he takes away your guilt. *There is a fountain...*
- He sanctifies you--sanctifies means "set you apart." Makes you holy. Pure. Maybe you are someone--a teenager, a young adult, an older adult--who has given themselves away sexually and now you feel permanently defiled. It's not true. He can sanctify you by his blood and spirit. *If any man is in Christ...* Maybe you feel like porn has already damaged your soul beyond repair. He can restore you, sanctify you, make you new.
- He justifies you--which means removes your guilt before God. Jesus died for your sexual sin. He paid the full price for your disobedience. So that *there is therefore now no condemnation...*

One last group I want to talk to here: maybe you struggle with SSA. And you say, "I want my body to glorify God but I have desires that I feel like I can't control that are sinful." Hear me: that's ok. All of us have desires that go opposite from God's will. What God wants is for you to submit yourself to him. Realize that he loves and accepts you just as you are. He'll not only wash away the guilt of your sin, he'll give you the strength to obey his commands, even though it may be difficult. We want you to come talk with us. Seriously. Talk to me. You don't have to be afraid or ashamed. There is more forgiveness and acceptance and help in Jesus than there is sin in you.

For all of us, for those with sexual sin, for those with messed up desires, twisted desires--we can all alike be washed, sanctified and justified in the name of Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

Which brings me to baptism. **Let me be very clear: this is not just an invitation for people with sexual sin.** These things just happened to happen on the same Sunday.

But all sin makes us defiled and guilty before God. All sin is alike to God. Jesus died for all of it. **So my big question: Have you accepted Christ?** Whether your biggest sins are sexual or not, have you had him come into your life and remove the stain of your sin and make you a new creation? That's my first invitation. To come forward and accept Christ. We're going to give you an opportunity to do that. Today. And then, if you want to, to be baptized, today, as a testimony to that.

Baptism is an outward picture of an inward transformation. When you go under the water... It's a symbol. It's like I said, the ring in the wedding ceremony. We ask you two questions...

And that leads me to my second invitation, **which is for those of you who have already received Christ but have never shown in through baptism...** Probably 40% of you sitting here are in that category.

Excuses

- You say... **No clothes.**
- First act of obedience.

BTW, some of you got saved a while ago, but have never done this. This is your chance today.

- **Not important**

- **I've already been baptized as a baby:** We respect that, but did you know there are 27 baptisms in the book of Acts and all 27 times they believed first.
- **I don't want to shame my parents:** You're not, you're fulfilling their hopes!
- **I don't want to become a Baptist.** You're not being baptized in the name of a denomination, but in the name of Jesus.
- **Every follower of Jesus should be baptized as a profession of their faith in Jesus.** If you haven't, you should do that today.

I'm going to lead you in a prayer so that those of you who want to receive Christ can, **and then I'm going to invite you to come forward and be baptized.**

PRAYER

In just a minute, I'm going to stand you up, if you prayed that prayer, or you need to be baptized, step out. In one motion.

You say, "I got questions?" Come and start a conversation. Don't come alone. **I'll count to 3. When I get to 3, we'll all stand, you come, and Summit we'll do what we always do: we'll cheer** like people are coming from darkness to light