



THE CROSS AND CHRISTIAN SEXUALITY (PART 1)
1 Corinthians 6:12-20

If you have Bible, and I hope you do, turn with me to 1 Corinthians 6. Let me also invite you to take out the Worship Guide that you received when you came in.

Just in case you have missed the last few weeks of cautions and the numerous emails we've sent out, and just in case you missed the caution at the beginning of our worship gathering this morning, I'm going to give you one more caution. This may be applicable, not just for those of you who are here this morning, but also for those who may be listening to this via podcast or download. This morning, we are diving into Part 1 of 2 on "The Cross and Christian Sexuality," and we're going to be looking at the last half of 1 Corinthians 6. We have tried to give forewarning that these two messages will be of the PG-13 variety. I want to leave it up to your discretion, but we will be talking about all sorts of terms associated with sexuality and sexual sin in our culture. I really want to have the freedom to use those terms and address prevalent issues in our sex-crazed culture, so if you've missed those cautions before now and want to take your children to their respective small groups, or if you're driving with your kids in the car right now, this is your last warning.

Here goes. I feel like I've built this up to the point where I don't know what you're imagining I'm going to say, and some of you may be let down that it's not as juicy as you were thinking it might be. I want to help us parent well, and give moms and dads across this faith family the freedom to have certain conversations with your children when you are ready to have those conversations.

There is no question that we live in a sex-crazed culture. My friend and fellow pastor Mark Dever said:

The most important revolution of the twentieth century [was] the sexual revolution.... Contraception replaced conception. Pleasure was separated from responsibility. It was as if a license was given out, legitimizing the bending of every part of our lives around serving ourselves. Since that time, divorce, remarriage, abortion, premarital sex, and extramarital sex, as well as homosexuality have been accepted by increasing percentages of the public. Pornography is huge business. [And] this is not just a problem with society out there. Many churches have found their members plagued by failed marriages and illicit affairs, by so-called private sins that turn into public disgraces, some of which are known, some of which are not yet known.

Dever said that of the twentieth century. What has been so remarkable in the first decade of the twenty-first century is the pace at which this sexual revolution has run. I see the Lord's leadership again in that elder retreat last August. I don't think this is a coincidence that we would plan to come to this text in this book on the Sunday before our Supreme Court will likely rule (this week) on how we will addition homosexuality and marriage in the laws of

our country. We live in a country marked by the recent degradation and growing redefinition of sexuality in marriage.

In addition, we live in a country characterized by profitable sex industries of all sorts. Prostitution is rampant. Sex trafficking is a \$58 billion industry worldwide, and the United States is ranked high among destinations for victims of sex trafficking. Listen to these words taken from a reputable report on sex trafficking.

A human trafficker can earn 20 times what he or she paid for a girl. Provided the girl was not physically brutalized to the point of ruining her beauty, the pimp could sell her again for a greater price because he had trained her and broken her spirit, which saves future buyers the hassle. A 2003 study in the Netherlands found that, on average, a single sex slave earned her pimp at least \$250,000 a year.

Sex traffickers use a variety of ways to "condition" their victims, including subjecting them to starvation, rape, gang rape, physical abuse, beating, confinement, threats of violence toward the victim and victim's family, forced drug use, and shame. These victims suffer devastating physical and psychological harm. However, due to language barriers, lack of knowledge about available services, and the frequency with which traffickers move victims, human trafficking victims and their perpetrators are difficult to catch.

This is not just "out there." Interstate 20, which runs right through Birmingham, Alabama, is known as "the largest sex traffic corridor in America." To bring it even more into this room, it is sex trafficking that in so many ways fuels and is fueled by the pornography industry in our culture, which brings in revenues of over 13 billion dollars a year, the fourth highest among all countries in the world. Every second, \$3,000 is spent on pornography and 28,000 Internet users view pornography. If the research among churches is right, hundreds of men listening to this sermon today have visited one of these pornographic sites over the last month or week or last night. I'm praying that the cross of Christ will change that today.

It's not just prostitution and pornography. We are bombarded by sex on all sides. In stores, in songs, on billboards, at the beach, in movies, on your phone, on Facebook, anywhere on the Internet. It creeps into our lives, our minds, our hearts, our marriages, our singleness. Casual hook-ups, cohabitation, heterosexual sin, homosexual sin, fornication, masturbation. Sexual temptation is all around us and prevalent in us. In an excellent chapter in an excellent book called *The Hole In Our Holiness*, my friend and fellow pastor, Kevin DeYoung, writes:

[This] is not about the culture out there. It's about those of us here – about what we as Christians are doing, what we are seeing, and what we may not know we are doing and seeing. I'm afraid we (including I) don't have the eyes to see how much the world has squeezed us into its mold.

He continues:

If we could transport Christians from almost any other century to any of today's "Christian" countries in the West, I believe what would surprise them most (besides our phenomenal affluence) is how at home Christians are with sexual impurity. It doesn't shock us. It doesn't upset us. It doesn't offend our

consciences. In fact, unless it's really bad, sexual impurity seems normal, just a way of life, and downright entertaining.

We come to 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, a text that we desperately need to hear today. Corinth was a city known for its rampant sexual immorality, a city known for sexual indulgence. Every night, over 1,000 temple prostitutes would come down from the temple of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love, to practice their trade. It was a city, a culture where "anything goes," and these new believers at Corinth had come out of that culture. What Paul does here in this passage is he gives them, in sum, an entirely new sexual ethic, an entirely new God-centered, gospel-saturated way to look at sexuality.

And we need to hear it. My goal today and next week, church, is not to push you down, to rail upon all that is wrong in our culture and in the church, but to show us there is a better way. There is a better way, men, to live your lives. There is a better way, women, to live your lives. This way is very different from the way of this world. I want to show you—and I'm praying that you'll see—very simply and very plainly that the way of this world leads to death, and your destruction, but the way of God's Word (the Word of God), leads to life and your delight.

I'm praying that these two weeks will be a wake-up call in a sex-crazed culture (and church) to an entirely new way of looking at sexuality and God's good design for us as singles and as married men and women all across this room. What we're going to do today is look at this passage and some other key passages in the Bible to see a cross-centered sexual ethic. If you'll look at your notes, you'll notice that I've divided the sermon up today into the five threads of the gospel because I want to show you in 1 Corinthians 6 and in other places in Scripture how the gospel and the cross of Christ distinctly transforms the way we view sexuality.

I want to lay these general, gospel foundations this week that will then set the stage next week for diving into some even more specific practical questions that I want to serve you pastorally with. Questions like, "Is masturbation sinful?" Some of you saying, "I know looking at porn is wrong, but how do I stop?" Others of you are single, and you're wondering, "How far is too far with my boyfriend or girlfriend?" Others of you married, and I want pastorally and biblically to help you think through how to best honor your wife or your husband and your God in ways you may not have thought about in every way sexually.

As always, we have a lot to ground to cover, so let's dive in to the text. First Corinthians 6:9, read with me there.

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. 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.

"All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything. "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food"—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then

take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh." But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:9-20)

The central exhortation: Flee sexual immorality.

In this passage, there is one central exhortation. It's in verse 18. You might underline it, circle it, highlight it, whatever, because it is the central command around which the text revolves. Flee sexual immorality. That's the point of this passage. Paul wants Christians to flee sexual immorality, to run from it. Not to reason with it, not to rationalize it, but to run from it, to flee as fast as you can.

Now that begs the question: What is the sexual immorality that we are supposed to flee? What is sexual immorality? The word Paul uses here for "sexual immorality" is the Greek word "*porneia*," which is a pretty general term that was used throughout Greek literature to refer to everything from adultery to fornication to prostitution to homosexuality, and this is the way we see it used in Scripture. Biblically, sexual immorality refers to any kind of sexual activity outside of marriage between a man and a woman.

The biblical clarification: Flee sexual activity outside of marriage between a man and a woman.

So here's the biblical clarification. What Paul is saying here is flee any and all sexual activity outside of marriage between a man and a woman. When you think about sexual immorality, think of any kind of sexual activity outside of marriage between a man and a woman. I'll quote one more time from Kevin DeYoung here because what he wrote was so helpful. He said:

The simplest way to understand "*porneia*" is to think about the things that would make you furious and heartbroken if you found out someone was doing them with your husband or your wife. If someone shook your wife's hand you would not be upset. If someone gave a casual side hug to your husband it probably wouldn't bother you. A kiss on the cheek or even a peck on the lips in some cultures might be appropriate. But if you found out another person had sex with your wife or saw her naked or touched certain parts of her body you would be furious. If you found another person made out with your husband or talked about sexual activities or made certain gestures you would be heartbroken. Why? Because these are all activities that are appropriate for a married couple but are inappropriate when practiced outside of the lawful relationship of a man and a woman in marriage. Any sexual activity between those who are not married, or between two men, or between two women, or among more than two persons, or between family members, or between those married to other people – any sexual activity in these contexts is sin and can be included in the prohibitions against "*porneia*."

Sexual immorality includes any and all sexual activity outside of marriage between a man and a woman. This is huge. This means that the Bible is saying, "Flee all sexual activity—all of it, any of it—that takes place outside of a man and a woman. Flee fornication. Flee

prostitution. Flee pornography. Flee adultery. Flee homosexual activity. Flee any and all sexual thinking, desiring, looking, touching, speaking, acting outside of marriage between a man and a woman." All of these things are sin, and we are to run from them.

Needless to say, we are going completely against the grain at this point of our culture, of our country, and of the church in so many ways in our day. To say that all of these things are sins, that they are wrong before God, immediately opens me—and the Bible, more importantly—to the charge of being, not just outdated or old-fashioned, but hurtful and hateful. My aim is to show you, even non-Christians in this room (and I know many of you are not yet followers of Christ) why the Bible says to flee these things. I want to show you why this is not only not hurtful or hateful, but this is helpful. This is good for us, and this is what our culture (and the church) needs most—to return to the good design of God. I want to preach this, and I am not afraid to preach this in our culture because I love you. See how the gospel, of which the cross of Christ is the center, transforms our sexuality.

The Character of God...

God has created our bodies for His ultimate glory.

First, the character of God. Paul makes clear in this text that God has created our bodies for His ultimate glory. We'll come back in a minute to Paul talking about what's lawful and helpful, but look at the second half of verse 13, where he says, "*The body is not meant for sexual immorality...*" (1 Corinthians 6:13) The body is not meant for sexual activity outside of marriage between a man and a woman "*but for the Lord...and the Lord for the body.*" (1 Corinthians 6:13)

This is a mammoth starting point. We in this room, in this culture need to realize that we have been created by God for God, and as such, our bodies belong to Him. This is huge! We are so driven today by whatever can bring our bodies the most pleasure. What can we see, what can we touch, what can we do, what can we eat, what can we listen to, what can we engage in? We are drowning in a culture that screams out, "Please your body," at every turn. And the Bible shouts, "Please God," at every turn. Our bodies—hear this!—have been created, not ultimately for self-gratification, but for God-glorification.

God has designed our bodies for our eternal good.

Now hear me. Keep going with me here; this is huge. Not only has God created our bodies for His ultimate glory, but second, God has designed our bodies for our eternal good. Did you hear what God's Word said? Not only is your body for the Lord, but the Lord is for your body. God's love for you includes God's love for your body. God is not indifferent to your body. He has designed your body for your good.

This is so key to hear. Please don't hear restrictions on how your body is to be used sexually - don't hear restrictions, limitations - as bad. Hear them as good, for your good. God, who is all-wise, made your body, designed your body. He knows better than you what is best for your body. To indulge in sexual immorality is to say to God, "You don't know how this body is to be used. I know better how this body is to be used." Don't say this to the God who is for your body and is for you. He's for you! Hear this: The God who made you is for you! He knows what He's talking about in His Word. He knows the way to satisfy, not just your soul, but your body. He is for you!

You want to know how much He is for you, for your body? He has made an eternal investment in your body. Look at verse 14, "*God raised the Lord...*" Jesus from the dead, "*...and will also raise us by his power.*" (1 Corinthians 6:14) Christianity is definitively not about the soul exclusive of the body. No, the end goal in Christianity is a resurrected body. God is eternally invested in the ultimate restoration and redemption of your body. Think about it. If God is the One who created our bodies for His glory and designed our bodies for our good—not just now but forever—then why would we use our bodies for any other purpose but the Lord's? Why would we use them for anything else? The body is for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body.

This is where I want to pause in 1 Corinthians 6, just step back for a minute, and look at God's design for our bodies—particularly sexually—in all of Scripture. I want us to "Google Earth" for a minute here, zoom out and look at the entire Bible, and I want to show you specifically how God designed sex. With sexual immorality, we're talking about that which goes outside of God's design. So what is God's design? What is God's design for our good sexually? God's Word shows us these seven main characteristics. (As a side note, I'm particularly indebted here to Daniel Heimbach's work on true sexual morality, a thick yet hugely helpful work on sexual morality.)

First, according to God's design, sex is relational. From the very beginning, God designed sex to involve a relationship between two people. We looked at this last week in Genesis 2:24, "*A man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*" (Genesis 2:24) Sex is not some mechanical act that happens between two objects; it's a personal act that happens between two people becoming one flesh. Proverbs 5, when talking about the prostitute, warns us not to give ourselves to a stranger because sex is a relational act with another person who you are joining your flesh with. This is not just something you do with someone, treating them as an object for pleasure; this is a person with whom you have relationship. Sex is relational.

Second, sex is covenantal, something you participate in with "*the wife of your youth,*" Malachi 2:14 says. The wife or husband that you are in covenant marriage with—and exclusively with that wife or that husband, and with no one else. Proverbs 5:15,

Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers with you. Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love. Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress? (Proverbs 5:15-20)

Solomon says, "Drink deeply from the well that is yours, not someone else's." Scripture resounds with this theme. Mark it down. All throughout the Bible, sex is only celebrated and advocated in the context of an exclusive covenant relationship between a husband and a wife. Period. There are no exceptions to this. No other kind of sex is celebrated in the Bible, only sex within the context of covenant marriage. Sex is covenantal.

Third, sex is intimate. It is obviously physical, yet deeply spiritual. We've seen this in Ephesians 5:22-23 in the intimate relationship between wives and husbands. There is something more going on in sex than just two bodies coming together. That's the outer shell, in a sense, but there's an inner reality being expressed there. Sex is a union, not only of bodies, but of souls. That's why Genesis 2:24, which we referenced earlier, says a man

will "hold fast" to his wife. That's a term that's used in other places in Scripture to describe a deep loyalty one has to another.

Then, you look at how sex is described in Genesis 4:1, and you see that sex involves completely knowing another person: "*Adam knew Eve his wife.*" (Genesis 4:1) Sex is intimate. It literally draws a man and woman so close to the point where nothing comes between them. Nothing divides them. Nothing separates them. Sex is a powerful picture of personal intimacy. Sex is intimate.

Fourth, sex is fruitful. Sex is productive, according to Genesis 1:28, leading men and women to multiply. Solomon uses this kind of language in Song of Solomon when he talks about ripened fig trees and blossoming vines. This doesn't mean that sex is wrong if it doesn't result in producing children. We know from what we're going to read in 1 Corinthians 7 in a couple of weeks that it's not good for a husband and wife to deprive one another in sex. It is good and fruitful in their relationship for them to come together sexually. So sex is fruitful.

Fifth, sex is selfless. It's not self-centered, much like we've read in Ephesians 5, "*Husbands should love their wives as their own bodies.*" (Ephesians 5:28) As I mentioned, 1 Corinthians 7 says, "*The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.*" (1 Corinthians 7:3-4) You hear the selflessness there?

Now, some may wonder, "How can sex really be selfless? I thought the purpose of sex was to satisfy myself." This is where I just can't improve on the words of Daniel Heimbach.

Some wonder, of course, how sex can be truly satisfying or enjoyable without focusing on yourself. The idea of enjoying selfless sex seems contradictory. Does not getting the most out of sex require putting your own desires ahead of everything else? The surprising answer is no, both on biblical terms and based on human experience as well. God has imbedded a paradox in how sexual pleasure works that helps to restrain natural human selfishness. The more a couple focuses on pleasing each other, the more enjoyment each receives in return; and the more a person focuses on demanding his or her own satisfaction, the less satisfaction is possible. Self-centeredness always destroys [sexual] satisfaction, while unselfishness always makes it better."

Well said, Heimbach! Sex is selfless.

Sixth, sex is complex. It involves the mind, the body, and the soul. We talked about this a bit earlier, but let's elaborate here on the many dimensions that are involved in sex. Sex involves the body obviously as 1 Corinthians 6:13-14 is pointing out. But sex also involves the mind. Jesus makes clear in Matthew 5:28 that you can be guilty of sexual sin without doing anything physically, simply in your thoughts. He says, "*Everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*" (Matthew 5:28)

Sex involves the body, sex involves the mind, and sex involves the soul. This is why Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:15 that having sex with a prostitute is like bringing Christ into bed with a prostitute because sex involves the soul. Which is also why the Bible clearly says not

to have sex (i.e., not to marry) an unbeliever in 2 Corinthians 6:14. Why? Because, follow this, spiritual life can't be detached from physical sex. C.S. Lewis put it this way:

The monstrosity of sexual intercourse outside marriage is that those who indulge in it are trying to isolate one kind of union (the sexual) from all the other kinds of union which were intended to go along with it and make up the total union. The Christian attitude does not mean that there is anything wrong about sexual pleasure, any more than about the pleasure of eating. It means that you must not isolate that pleasure and try to get it by itself, any more than you ought to get the pleasures of taste without swallowing and digesting, by chewing things and spitting them out again.

Sex is complex, involving the mind, the body, and the soul altogether.

Finally, sex is complementary when it comes to both gender and kind. Meaning that sex unites together two people that complement one another on two main levels: Complementary gender and complementary kind. The first, complementary gender. In Genesis 2, God designed woman physically different than He designed man, in a way that is complementary to man. Man and woman are designed as two pieces of a puzzle that are carefully, in so many wonderful ways, designed to fit with one another. I'm not going to show pictures, but you know what I'm saying here! Sex between two males or sex between two females violates that picture of complementary gender. Which is why the Bible clearly says in Leviticus 18:22, "*You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.*"

It's interesting. Right after that is when there is a similar prohibition against sex that violates complementary kinds. Leviticus 18:23 goes on to say, "*And you shall not lie with any animal and so make yourself unclean with it, neither shall any woman give herself to an animal to lie with it: it is perversion.*" God has designed sex to be complementary. People say, "Well, the Bible's prohibition against homosexuality is just Old Testament law. It doesn't apply anymore." Which is why I also included Romans 1 in parentheses there (which we'll look at in a moment) that clearly condemns homosexual activity as outside of God's design. Not to mention the fact that nowhere, not one time, is sex ever celebrated in Scripture in a way that is not complementary in both gender and kind between a man and a woman in marriage.

That's a summary of God's good design for sex. God has designed sex to be relational, covenantal, intimate, fruitful, selfless, complex, and complementary, and He has designed it this way for our good and for His glory. This is how the body is for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body.

The Sinfulness of Man...

But then enters the sinfulness of man and our rebellion against God's design. This is where I want you to turn back one book in your Bible to the book of Romans, and I want to key in on one passage there—Romans 1, starting in verse 18. Though there's a lot here, we're going to fly through this part, Secret Church style. I didn't feel like we could address what Paul is saying here in 1 Corinthians 6 about sexuality without going to what he said in Romans 1, particularly because you'll never guess where the book of Romans was written. It was written by Paul when he was in the city of Corinth. Paul is sitting in the city of

Corinth, and I can just picture him looking out over this sex-crazed city as he writes these words. Romans 1:18,

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. (Romans 1:18-27)

What an indictment! And not just an indictment of homosexuality but of all sexual immorality, all sexual activity outside of marriage between a man and a woman. The reason I want to read this passage this morning is because in it, Paul uncovers the anatomy of sexual sin. Did you see it? Three times he repeats a fourfold progression of sin, specifically sexual sin, and with this progression, he's showing us how sexual sin comes about. I want you to see this, and then we'll talk about each of them in your notes.

It all starts with God showing us His glory in creation, but in response, we don't glorify Him. We don't give thanks to Him, and instead, "*our foolish hearts are darkened.*" (Romans 1:21) First, sin disorders our hearts. Watch the progression here. Then what happens? Romans 1 says, "*Their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools...*" (Romans 1:21-22) A disordered heart leads to disordered thought, so sin disorders our hearts and then our thoughts. We think we're wise, but our thinking is futile and foolish.

Then what happens next? "*Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts...*" (Romans 1:24) Sin disorders our hearts, then our thoughts, and then our desires. We begin to desire that which doesn't honor God, and the result is - this is the fourth part - disordered actions. We act out on those desires.

This is the progression of sin. It's mentioned two other times. In verse 25, you have disordered hearts and disordered thoughts, then in verse 26, you have disordered desire, and then disordered action that follows. Then in verse 28, you have a disordered heart in the beginning of the verse, then a disordered mind and desires that flow from that mind, and then disordered action.

This is huge. If we could only understand this, we would understand how all sin develops in any one of our lives. Sin disorders our heart to the point where God is not supreme in our hearts, which then disorders our thoughts, which then disorders our desires, which culminates in sinful actions. This is how all sin works, and this is how sexual sin works.

Sin disorders our hearts.

See this in your notes. First and foremost, sin disorders our hearts. Our foolish hearts are darkened. Why? Because in our hearts, we exchange God's pattern for our preferences. God is glorious, Romans 1 says, but we spurn Him in our hearts, turning aside to ourselves. God has a pattern for sex (we just talked about it), but we turn from it toward our preferences, believing in our hearts that our way is better. We live out Proverbs 14:12: "*There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.*"

We exchange God's pattern for our preferences, and we exchange God's praise for our pleasures. There are passions of the flesh (1 Peter 2:11) that wage war against our soul, and we are all guilty of letting the pleasures of this world overcome the praise of God in our hearts. This is why - don't miss it - we engage in sexual immorality all across this room. Because there's a problem in our hearts—all of our hearts, not just certain people, all of us.

We are all born with a heart of pride that is inclined to turn away from God, Genesis 8:21. David says in Psalm 51, "*Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.*" (Psalm 51:5) We all have different biological heritages, but we all have one common spiritual inheritance: Sin. This is huge because no one in this room can or should say, "Well, God wouldn't allow me or someone else to be born with a bent toward a particular sexual sin." The Bible is clear. We are all born with a bent toward sexual deviation. All of us.

We are all born with a heart of pride, and we are all bent toward sexual deviation. Which is why we have continual strong exhortations in Scripture, like 1 Corinthians 6 and 1 Thessalonians 4, to flee and abstain from sexual immorality. All of us are bent toward sexual deviation from God's design in some way. Maybe it's homosexual, maybe it's heterosexual, maybe it's both, but this is not just something a few people struggle with. This is something every sinful heart is prone to struggle with in some way or the other.

On a side note, we must be careful not to be guilty of selective moral outrage today, particularly on the issue of homosexuality. Yes, it is right to stand upon and speak about what God has said regarding homosexuality, but let me just confess the obvious. I represent the class of people responsible for the vast majority of sexual wrongdoing in the world today: Male heterosexuals. And I and every other heterosexual person would be wise to stop looking at the speck in others' eyes when there is a log in our own. If we roll our eyes and shake our heads when we see the Supreme Court ruling this case, yet we turn the channel to stare uncritically at adultery in a drama, watch the trivialization of sex in a sitcom, look at seductive images on reality TV shows, or virtual prostitution in advertisements that sell by provoking sexual interest in us, then we have missed the point. Are these sins acceptable because they're the sins of the majority? We are all born with a heart of pride; we all have a bent toward sexual deviation. Every one of us.

Sin disorders our thoughts.

Sin disorders our hearts, and from this, sin disorders our thoughts. As a result of disordered hearts, our thinking is foolish and we exchange the truth of God for lies. You say, "In what way?" Well, notably, we exchange God's Word for our experience. In the words of Romans 8, we set our minds are on the things of the flesh, which are hostile to God. So much sexual

sin today is justified, rationalized today by Christians who say, "Well, this is just who I am." Or, "I can't help it. This is the way God made me." Or, "God is the One who's given me this desire for this guy, for this girl to be fulfilled in this way, and surely He wants me to be happy." We start to twist God's Word, saying, "Well, the Bible doesn't say I can't do this." Or, "The Bible technically doesn't prohibit this."

This happens with issues like masturbation, this kind of thinking is pervasive across the whole "how far is too far" discussion, and this is at the root of justification and rationalization for homosexuality in the church today. I have read the arguments over and over again. People who say - professing Christians who try to use the Bible to justify homosexuality, and I've come to the conclusion that, if you're going to try to defend homosexuality in relation to Scripture, you've got to either believe that the Bible is not authoritative or completely wrong on this issue, and that kind of thinking is dangerous.

Just listen to Gary David Comstock, university Protestant chaplain at Wesleyan University, trying to defend homosexuality. He said:

Not to recognize, critique, and condemn Paul's equation of godlessness with homosexuality is dangerous. To remain within our respective Christian traditions and not challenge those passages that degrade and destroy us is to contribute to our own oppression.... Those passages will be brought up and used against us again and again until Christians demand their removal from the biblical canon or, at the very least, formally discredit their authority to prescribe behavior.

In other words, Comstock says, "We need to get rid of these verses because they're dangerous." William M. Kent, a member of the United Methodist Committee to Study Homosexuality, said this: "The scriptural texts in the Old and New Testaments condemning homosexual practice are neither inspired by God nor [are they] of enduring Christian value." So Kent is honest enough to hear that the Bible is indeed condemning homosexual practice, but then he just says the Bible isn't true, it's not inspired by God, and it's not of any value for Christians. It's dangerous to Christians.

You either have to say that the Bible is dangerous, or that the Bible is deficient. This one totally takes the cake. Luke Timothy Johnson, Professor of New Testament at the Candler School of Theology at Emory University, accepts that "the Bible nowhere speaks positively or even neutrally about same-sex love." He acknowledges there's nothing positive in the Bible about homosexuality, but then he concludes:

I think it important to state clearly that we do, in fact, reject the straightforward commands of Scripture, and appeal instead to another authority when we declare that same-sex unions can be holy and good. And what exactly is that authority? We appeal explicitly to the weight of our own experience and the experience thousands of others have witnessed too, which tells us that to claim our own sexual orientation is in fact to accept the way in which God has created us. By so doing, we explicitly reject as well the premises of the scriptural statements condemning homosexuality—namely, that it is a vice freely chosen, a symptom of human corruption, and disobedience to God's created order.

In the words of Luke Timothy Johnson, "The experience of man trumps the Word of God." Do you see how sin so disorders our thoughts?

We exchange God's Word for man's experience, and we exchange truth for tolerance. Again, I only want to reflect what the Bible is saying here, but I know that what I am saying is labeled intolerant today, which is the cardinal sin in our culture. To say that homosexual expression or even any heterosexual expression outside of marriage between a man and a woman is sexually immoral sin is labeled completely intolerant.

Think with me about the foolishness of even that statement: The idea that I am intolerant here. First of all, it's a self-defeating statement, meaning if you were to claim that I am intolerant, then you would be expressing your intolerance of me. Our culture is sick of intolerant people, and it's not going to tolerate them anymore. In other words, people who claim to be tolerant are intolerant of intolerant people, which means they cannot tolerate themselves.

This is the foolishness we have created in our thinking. We have created the idea that every thought in the world is equally right and equally valid. As a result, to disagree with someone else is to be intolerant. But tolerance itself implies disagreement. I don't tolerate you if you believe what I believe. "If you believe that Jesus is the Lord of the universe, then I don't tolerate you. If you deny that Jesus even exists, then yes, I tolerate you, and you hopefully tolerate me, though we passionately disagree with each other."

What we have done, though, is we have so exalted tolerance that we actually think that all beliefs are on the same level, and the cardinal sin is to disagree with someone or to say that someone is wrong. The result is that we're robbing ourselves of the quest for truth. We deny truth, we ignore truth, and in our minds, we exalt ourselves above truth. This is what Romans 1 is talking about, and it's reflected in Jesus' words in John 8. We're not even allowed to have discussions of truth today because of our idolatry of tolerance. Sin disorders our thinking.

Sin disorders our desires.

From this, sin disorders our desires. God gave them over to shameful lusts and desires. Our hearts affect our thoughts, and our thoughts affect our desires, and when it comes to our desires, we exchange sexual responsibility for supposed rights. Look at the contemporary arguments today for all sorts of sexual immorality. They revolve around our supposed rights to express ourselves sexually however we desire. According to us, we're not human if we can't please our bodies however we want, and any attempts to limit sexual expression are seen as oppressive and inhumane.

It's why the discussion of homosexuality and same-sex marriage today is seen as a civil rights issue. Just as we should not discriminate between black and white because that is someone's ethnic identity, we should not differentiate between homosexual and heterosexual because that is someone's social identity. "I was born this way. Fulfilling my desires sexually in this way is who I am."

We point to research to back it up, and in the process, we exchange what Scripture says about our desires for what science says about our desires. The idea that prevails today is that science is serving the cause of civil rights, and the bigotry of traditional religion, specifically Christian religion, is against civil rights. Now, I'm not saying that the Bible is opposed to science. In fact, I'm confident that the Bible is not opposed to truth in any form, scientific or otherwise. No matter what science says or what science concludes about our desires, where our desires come from, and how we get them, Scripture still speaks about those desires.

And Scripture says that - follow this - improper sexual desire is immoral, not inevitable. Just because we have a desire does not mean we are entitled to carry out that desire. Romans 6, Galatians 5, and Ephesians 5 all make that clear. Let me put it this way. If an adult man solicits sex with an elementary school girl because he desires it, no one is saying, "Let him do it. That's just the way he is." His desires are immoral, not inevitable.

Similarly, when a man makes a rude sexual comment or maybe even when a man commits adultery, we don't just shrug it off and say, "Well, men are just like that; they have those desires." We can't look at young teenagers who are experimenting with sex as just doing what they're expected to do because they have those desires. No, improper sexual desire is immoral, not inevitable, particularly when desire leads to action.

Sin disorders our actions.

Sin disorders our hearts, our thoughts, and our desires, and sin disorders our actions. We act out our desires. This is most clear in the end of Romans 1, when Paul lists sin after sin after sin that flow from disordered hearts, thoughts, and desires.

To sum all of this up, in the end, we exchange moral obligations for natural explanations. This is similar to what we saw in Romans 1, and it's reiterated in Romans 2. We exchange moral obligations for natural explanations, assuming that if there is a natural explanation, that implies moral obligation. "If I'm this way, then I have to act it out." Do not miss the danger of such thinking. This is where the fallacy is so clearly exposed.

Please forgive the illustration, but I think it poignantly makes the point. Think about the explanations given for sexual immorality in so many of our lives and all across our culture, and then apply those same explanations to pedophilia. People say that's an unfair comparison because pedophilia involves manipulation between, say, a man and a boy. But, and I'm not making this up, real articles argue, who is to define manipulation.

The pedophile says,

What kind of sexual expression doesn't contain some form of manipulation anyway? And if manipulation is used to make somebody else feel better, then why is that not a good thing? After all, we both enjoy this; how can that be wrong? Several studies have shown that both partners enjoy a positive experience. And I want to do this. Why would God have given me this desire if it wasn't intended to be carried out? He's made me this way, and He's given me this gift. Jesus never spoke against it; in fact, He welcomed the children. I'm a Christian, and I have these desires. I can't change. I've tried to go to therapists, but it doesn't work. I've been told to suppress my natural orientation, but I can't deny it, no matter how many people in society say I should. I am a part of a persecuted minority, and as a result, I am all the more deserving of civil rights.

Now that may sound outlandish, but it's the exact same kind of arguments that are used to justify sexual immorality all across this room. Please don't miss the point here. I am not saying these things, but this is an argument commonly used in our society to justify this behavior. See as clearly as you can that causation does not mean justification. "That's just the way I am" just doesn't hold up. *Time* magazine reported at one point that infidelity may be in our genes! Gentlemen, it may not be natural for you to be faithful to one woman, but adultery is not justifiable before God. Why? Because no matter what factors explain your desires and contribute to your actions, you sin when you seek sexual fulfillment outside of

your marriage to your wife. In the same way, any other sexual activity outside of marriage between a man and a woman is sin before God.

You may struggle with temptation in one way, and I may struggle with temptation in another way. There is no question about this. We have different challenges when it comes to sexuality. The reality is we don't always choose our temptations, but we do always choose our reactions.

So hear me, please, if you have experienced, do experience homosexual desire—sometimes called homosexual orientation - even if you are a devoted follower of Christ, and this is a real temptation for you, I, in no way, want to invalidate that. I am not saying that you have necessarily chosen that temptation. But I want to remind you and everyone else as we struggle with all sorts of sexual temptations, that nowhere in the Bible does it say, "Thou shalt not do 'x' unless, of course, you tried hard to change, you went for prayer and counseling, and you found you just couldn't stop wanting to do 'x'." If that's the case, then 'x' is no longer a sin for you. It's an innate gift for you to indulge in." That's not in the Bible.

You say, "Well, where does that leave me?" Where does that leave all of us? Here's where it leaves us, every single one of us. We are sinners! We need a Savior! And we have one!

The Sufficiency of Christ...

Jesus has purchased our bodies with His blood.

See the sufficiency of Christ. Jesus has purchased our bodies with His blood. Come back to 1 Corinthians 6, and hear God's Word to you. Christian, you were bought at a price. Non-Christian, know this: Because of your sinfulness, you have been separated from fellowship with God and deserve eternal death as a result of your sin. God saw your hopeless plight to try and find your way back to Him, and He sent His Son, Jesus, to pay the penalty for your sin. He lived the life you were not capable of living, sinless and perfect before God the Father. However, He took on your sinfulness and died the death you deserved to die, so that, through faith in His work on the cross and resurrection from the dead, you can be made right with God and have eternal life.

Oh, see it! Jesus has paid a price, a steep price, an infinite price for your body. He has covered over your sin with His blood. I know that many of us in this room have dishonored God greatly with our bodies. As we are talking about the seriousness of sexual sin, this is the point where I want to remind you that, whatever you have done, the God of the universe cares for your body deeply. He sees your body as an invaluable, priceless, eternal treasure of His handiwork, so much so that He sent His Son to pay the price for your body, so that by faith in Christ, your body might be altogether pure and holy and clean today.

Jesus has united our bodies with His body.

Jesus has purchased our bodies with His blood, and then, Jesus has united our bodies with His body. This is the staggering, shocking reality that Paul brings into the picture here in 1 Corinthians 6. In verses 15-17, He talks about how our bodies are joined together with Christ's body in such a way that when you give yourself over to sexual immorality, you are bringing Christ Himself into that sexual immorality with you.

Guard what you see, what you touch, what you say. Guard what you think, what you desire, how you act. If you look at porn, that's involving Christ in pornography. If you sleep with another man, it's bringing Christ Himself into that bed. Christian, God forbid! God, give us a high view—your view—of our bodies, as temples of the Holy Spirit, filled with the very presence of Christ, in such a way that we would not dare to take the body of Christ and expose Him to that which He died to save us from.

The Necessity of Faith...

Turn from your sin and yourself.

God, give us faith. See the necessity of faith. How shall we respond to this Word from God all across this room? Here's how: Turn from your sin and yourself. Paul, in the very beginning of the passage we read (verses 12-14), points to the justifications people were giving for indulging in sexual sin. "All things are lawful for me. It's what my body was made for."

This is exactly what we talked about earlier when we talked about supposed rights, the freedom of sexual expression. That's what we want. We want freedom to express ourselves sexually however we desire. Yet, just like we've talked about before, in our twisted thinking, what we think is freedom is actually slavery - slavery to ourselves. Jesus came to give us true freedom, the freedom to be who God created us to be and to experience what God has designed us to experience.

Paul says that in Christ, we are free from bodily sin that harms so deeply, controls so quickly, and devastates so painfully. Did you notice the nature of sexual sin here? In verse 18, right after the exhortation to flee sexual immorality, Paul points out the difference between sexual sin and other sin, saying, "*Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.*" (1 Corinthians 6:18) Here he's saying that sexual sin is different. Yes, all sin is the same in the sense that it dishonors God, but the Bible makes clear here that sexual sin is particularly destructive to you.

It harms deeply. It harms you. It harms others. Now, don't get me wrong. Sexual sin is deceptive. It promises satisfaction; it promises reward. That's why we run after it. But it never delivers what it promises. Never. Temporary pleasure at the time? Maybe. Deep pain in the end? Every time.

Sexual sin harms deeply, and it controls so quickly. Paul says, "I will not be dominated by anything." Sexual sin does this. It dominates, it controls us so quickly. I talk with people all the time who feel like they are controlled by, addicted to some facet of sexual sin.

It controls so quickly, and sexual sin devastates so painfully. I am confident that we could go around this room this morning and hear story after story that testifies to the truth of this reality. Adultery devastates. Pornography devastates. Sexual immorality devastates. It devastates us, our own bodies. It devastates others, particularly the spouse we have united our bodies with. And ultimately, it devastates Christ with whose body we are joined together.

No sin that a person commits has more built-in pitfalls, problems, and impending destructiveness than sexual sin. It has broken more marriages, shattered more homes, caused more heartache and disease, and destroyed more lives than alcohol and drugs combined. It causes lying, stealing, cheating, and killing, as well as bitterness, hatred, slander, gossip, and unforgiveness. Sexual sin harms deeply, controls quickly, and devastates painfully. So turn from it, run from it. Flee sexual immorality.

Trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord.

Turn from it, and trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord as the Savior, who will, at this moment, forgive you of all your sin and, as the Lord, will unite you with Himself. For in Him—in Christ!—we are free from bodily sin that harms so deeply, controls so quickly, and devastates so painfully, and we are free to enjoy His great purpose for our bodies as we exalt His great glory with our bodies. Free to enjoy God's great purpose for your body!

Ladies and gentlemen, you must decide who knows what is best for your body. Teenagers, teenage girls, you have to decide who knows what is best for your body. The God of the universe or your boyfriend? Teenage guys, who knows what is best for your body? The God of the universe or your girlfriend? Husbands, wives, men, women, singles, married, who knows what is best for your body? This guy or that lady you've been flirting with, or the God of the universe? This or that page on the Internet, or the Word of the Living God? He created our bodies, He designed our bodies, and He's worthy of our trust.

The Urgency of Eternity...

Enjoy His great purpose for your body as you exalt His great glory with our body, knowing that there's something much deeper at stake here than what is going on in the culture around us right now and what the Supreme Court is going to rule in our country. Look beyond these things, way beyond these things to the urgency of eternity.

According to the sure judgment of God, unrepentant sexual sin leads to hell.

Look not to nine judges in the United States of America, but look to the ultimate Judge over the entire universe, the holy God before whom you will one day stand to give an account for your life. This is where the most controversial part comes in, but it's also the most clear part: According to the sure judgment of God, unrepentant sexual sin leads to hell. You look at every single one of these passages, and almost every time you have these lists of sins that lead to hell, sexual immorality is mentioned. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 is crystal clear: "*Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.*" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)

Now this is not saying that if you have ever committed sexual immorality of any sort, that you are going to hell. That's why I put "unrepentant sexual sin" because that's what the text is saying. Those whose lives are characterized by sexual immorality, those who refuse to repent of sexual immorality, will experience eternal condemnation from God. Sexual immorality is extremely serious. Turn from your sin, I urge you. Turn from sexual immorality. Flee it! In Christ, flee it!

Only by the sheer grace of Christ, humbly repentant sinners enter into heaven.

For when you do, only by the sheer grace of Christ, humbly repentant sinners enter into heaven. What do you need to repent of today? Some flirting with adultery, some dabbling, some indulging in pornography, some experimenting with homosexual thought and desire and activity have bought into the lies of this world that says, "Well, this is who you are. Act out on it"? To every man or woman in this room bent toward sexual deviation, what do you need to repent of today? Run from sexual immorality. Run to the Savior King who has purchased your body with His blood and unites your body with Himself.

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