

## The Sin of Sexual Immorality

In another article we addressed the sin of homosexuality. This article deals with sexual immorality in general. Our nation is plagued by and is paying the price for a decades old flippant attitude regarding sexual activity outside of marriage. Unwed mothers, abortions, sexually transmitted diseases, broken families and the like are just some of the earthly consequences of this immorality. Beyond these, however, lies the eternal consequence of this sin.

In his inspired listing of the works of the flesh, Paul begins with “adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness” and concluded by saying “that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Galatians 5:19-21). While adultery has reference to “unlawful intercourse with another’s wife” and fornication is defined as “illicit sexual intercourse,” the remaining words are general enough in nature to encompass all sexual activity unapproved by the Lord. That would include oral sex, improper touching, pornography and such like. Hebrews 13:4 says, “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” The word for “bed” here has reference to sexual intercourse. In the context Paul is saying that such is honorable in marriage. In contrast to sexual activity between a husband and his wife is the rest of the verse where he speaks of whoremongers (“a man who engages in unlawful sexual intercourse”) and adulterers. Outside of marriage, sexual activity is impure, unholy, ungodly, unauthorized and soul-damning.

The Bible contains many examples of the harm done by sexual immorality. King David and his adultery with Bathsheba in II Samuel 11 comes first to mind. On the other hand, God’s Word also contains examples of those who learned to control their passions and rose above the lure of impurity. The account of Joseph and his refusal to lie with Potiphar’s wife is familiar to all students of the Bible (Genesis 39).

When we became Christians, we were called out of the world of unrighteousness and into a life of holiness. As children of God, we are dead to sin but alive to Him (Romans 6:11). We are to put to death the ways of the world or, as Paul said, “mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” (Colossians 3:5). God is not glorified by sexual immorality. Such wickedness dishonors God, harms the soul and the influence of those who engage in it and brings shame and reproach upon the church of our Lord. It’s difficult enough to get non-Christian friends and family to listen to the pure and simple Gospel of Jesus Christ. When they see the fruits of sexual immorality among members of the church, they often close their ears to the apparent hypocrisy of a church that teaches purity but doesn’t practice it. Men and women, boys and girls, when you engage in sexual immorality, you lead souls astray. Even if you repent and turn back to God, you may never again be able to open the door of salvation to some whom you have influenced for evil due to your impurity. Engaging in sexual immorality, especially when it results in disease or pregnancy, is not one of those sins that you can just cover up. It is something that can stay with you the rest of your life. Yes, you can be forgiven (I Corinthians 6:9-11), but the results of the sin can remain.

Just like all temptations, the lure of sexual immorality can be overcome. In the opening verses of I Corinthians 7 Paul is addressing husbands and wives. He recognizes that there are occasions during which a husband and his wife would not be able to engage in sexual activity. He urges both parties to give themselves to fasting and prayer during this time, “that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.” (I Corinthians 7:5). In other words, to prevent them from lusting after others, Paul urges couples to focus on spiritual matters. If this is effective for husbands and wives, then it should be effective for all. Instead of lusting, turn your thoughts to God.

Paul himself wrestled with the pull of the world. Read of his internal conflict in Romans 7. Note his struggle with the flesh in I Corinthians 9:27. “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” He fought to keep himself pure. That’s what it takes. We must pray and study God’s Word to allow our thoughts to rise above sexual immorality. It can be done. John wrote, “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.” (I John 4:4). As strong as Satan’s pull might be, it is powerless in comparison to God’s strength and the strength that

a faithful Christian can know when he or she fills heart and mind with righteous thoughts (Philippians 4:8).

We can overcome the sin of sexual immorality. To do it we're going to need to spend more time in God's Word, more time in prayer, more time in fellowship with the saints. We're going to need to spend less time around those who would lead us into temptation, less time watching, reading and listening to that which glamorizes sexual immorality, less time wanting to dress like, talk like, walk like and act like the sexually impure in our world.

This is not a game, folks. Sexual immorality is not something of which one should be proud. It has adversely affected countless numbers of lives and continues to do so today. Each one of us must take control of our lives and focus on heaven if we want to stay pure and be with the Lord in eternity (Colossians 3:1-3).

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