

## 2020 Sexual Immorality 1 Cor 6

I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but, man, you look around and it's pretty plain to see where we are headed as a society. "Love is love" has become the excuse to do anything with anyone or anything, and if you infringe on that "right" you are hateful, mean, and even against god! "My body my choice" screams for absolute autonomy and the degradation (or death) of others as long as you get to do what you want with whoever you want to. "Male, female?" What's the difference? What's it matter? And your body? It's a playground designed for maximum pleasure regardless of the pain it causes others, or yourself. And if you even try to bring this up you are, at best: weird, at worst: hateful. It's so plain to see where the world is going...

Oh wait! I'm sorry. I misread my notes. That's where the world was! Ah, that makes so much more sense. In 1 Corinthians, Paul is speaking out against sexual immorality because (guess what?) Corinth and a whole bunch of other Roman cities were astoundingly sexually immoral!

The Nymphaeum, found in many Greco-Roman cities, was the building where marriages were performed and the nymphs, gods of water and fertility, were worshipped. And the best way to make the gods share their fertility with the earth? Show them some fertility. This is where we get our word – nymphomaniac:

someone obsessed with, well, sexuality. Corinth the city of our letter today had the temple of Aphrodite, which employed many temple prostitutes. And this was accepted!

Now don't get me wrong, in the last decade we have gone from "stay out of my bedroom" to "you have to have this, ahem, 'person dressed a certain way' read story hour at the library." And all the people who yelled at us about the slippery slope fallacy, well, I wonder where they are at? It's hard to keep track when we are racing so quickly down the slippery slope.

But we like to think we are so enlightened! We like to think we are so advanced, open, and free! We like to say the Bible, and Paul, they were products of a more modest, closed-off, time. Dead wrong! "There is nothing new under the sun." So Paul speaks out against the temple prostitution because he was talking to Christians who grew up where that was normal. He tells them to no longer go there, not for worship, or any other temptation.

And they had their excuses too. "It's just a feeling, just a good time, no one is getting hurt. God doesn't care about our bodies, just our souls - and he will forgive us anyway - all things are lawful for me! Right?"

And how easy it would have been for Paul to say, "Well let's compromise here. Just as long as you love Jesus, or just as long as you are committed to that person

or persons.” Maybe he could have got more people in the pews if he watered down the message. But he doesn’t. And it is not because Paul is a “product of his time!” 1 Corinthians, like this sermon today, is counter-cultural! He was not a product of his time so he stood fast on the truth of God’s word and his view for the gifts, yes gifts, of sexuality and marriage and family.

I have often said, and I will say it again: God does not ask us to do useless things! He knew what he was doing when he crafted man and woman and made them for each other. He knew what he was doing when he gave us marriage for healthy sexual expression and for the raising of children. And the sociology bears this out: children are healthiest in a family with a mother and a father who are committed - that’s from a CDC report, folks. The sociology tells us that rushing to home base on the first night of an online date, or watching who knows what on the screen, leads down ever more twisted paths seeking the next high, and leaving in its wake: people objectified (or trafficked), unhealthier sexual expression, and a whole lot of broken hearts and homes. The biology bears this out: 80, yes 80, percent of sexually active people outside of monogamy have HPV, and I won’t get into the other infections that, in the first century, you couldn’t just get a prescription for. So God doesn’t tell us to do useless things! The sixth commandment, “thou shalt not commit adultery,” is not a hoop to jump through, it is for our good. That our

families might flourish in healthy, well adjusted sexuality, and in joy and forgiveness.

Now does this mean you have to hate those with a different worldview or lifestyle?

No, love your neighbor! But loving them does not mean forsaking the truth either.

Does this mean you have to vote a certain way? No, this is a republic, at least for

now, and a melting pot. And the reality is I am not as concerned with other

people's bedrooms as I am with the ability to put this sermon out and not get sued

for it. So by all means, let's get along, pray for an end to the nonsense violence and

degradation of free speech. The Lord abhors violent hands, and he also is against

kicking people out of the family when they struggle or stumble in these regards.

We speak the truth in love. And praise God that we are saved by grace through

faith, we all have different sins we struggle with, the Corinthians had this one, so

Paul speaks to it. You have yours, I have mine. We rejoice in the mercy of God,

through Jesus, to wash all sins away.

But the cross is not an excuse to embrace the sins. They had to be punished there

for a reason! Because they bring pain and evil. But we have been set free from

them, bought under a new master and King and he is good. So why would we

march left when he would have us flank right? Is that what a disciple, "a follower"

would do? Is that what Samuel would say or "Speak Lord, your servant hears"?

The reality is that we all, in whatever temptation ails us, want to operate on our own. "It's my life and no one can tell me how to live it!" Well God can. Because he gave you the life, physically, but even more, you Christian, Paul writes: "You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." You are not free to do as you will with your body and life, and we rile and try to usurp that authority, but that's what we talked about last week, that's the first sin, to make our own rules, set our own laws. Repent. You belong to God, bought and paid for.

And we know that price, ya? The blood of Jesus was spilt for every lustful thought in your head (that, if made public, would send you running from here in shame). The blood of Jesus spilled for every harmful word, every prideful narcissistic tendency, every bit of rebellion. A price was paid to cover it. A high price. Before him, we have no leg to stand on. So we fall on our knees, and we find a merciful Savior who doesn't flog us, but buys us to himself, to his family. Where he will not abuse us, he will not forsake us, he will not objectify us for his needs, he will wash us clean that we might flourish in love and joy. And guess what? In that family, you find some freedom! Freedom from guilt, help to carry our crosses, we find value immeasurable (he would pay that price for me? Yes!). We find freedom from the fear of death because we know our Master beats it and gives eternal life in a

kingdom where there won't be any more suffering, depression, identity crisis, or fear. That is the love of God for us.

May our homes and lives be little, although imperfect, reflections of this. You want to change the world? Grab your bible for 5 minutes a day, scribble a few notes in the margin, and then, having read his Word, go follow Him. What does that look like? It looks like one single man fighting against the temptation of the screens; one widow speaking gentle truth in love to a grandchild with an alternative lifestyle, one couple rejoicing in their spouse as a gift even if their bodies aren't as magnificent as they once were, it's one family modeling love, forgiveness, and the blessings both sexes have and offer. It's the divorced person or the single parent recognizing the brokenness in us and in the world but still striving to uphold and rejoice in God's good design for us all. That's life changing, that's world changing. It certainly worked in Corinth, which, remember, was worse off than we are.

So "Love is love?" No. There are different types of love, the love for a wife is much different and expressed different than love for a child. "Love is love?" No. Not all physical love is good love, we all know this. So there are consent, statutory, incest, polygamy laws, and so on, and rightly so. "Love is love?" No. Physical love, eros, is a gift of God but is powerful and to be used wisely, safely. The world wants to ignore that, but it can't, nor can we. "Love is love?" No. God loves us differently. He loves us: agape, which is a steadfast, sacrificial, and covenant love.

And may that be our comfort as we struggle with this commandment and as the world seems to spin towards insanity, he loves us steadfastly, he has paid the price for our redemption. He will not forsake us, he will not take his promises back, he has already paid the price.

The world would call 1 Corinthians, this sermon, and us: hateful. But lets flip that. Let's be joyful. Let's rejoice in God's design for us, however he made us, and in whatever station of life we are in. Our God gives love in healthy ways, lets share it.

Amen.