

Introduction



Okay, turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 6. This is part one of a two part message so today is really a setup message for what is coming next week. So don't expect a full exposition today. Today gives us

the principle that we will really leverage for next week.

Now if you recall, Paul is addressing various ways in which the sin of pride is destroying the Corinthian church. What these Corinthians need, according to Paul, is simple humility.

And just like the Corinthians, if we have any hope of having a healthy church, we need simple humility as well, this attitude that we know very little and that God knows how to run our life better than we do. And we need that belief to really permeate every aspect of our lives. There's no sector of our life that is shielded from the application of this principle. The Holy Spirit wants influence in all of it.

Now very practically, perhaps one of the most difficult things to surrender, and yet at the same time one of the most important things to surrender, is our desires. To say and really believe, "What I want to do and what is best for me are not always related."

"For those of you who were here last week we talked about of the many effects of the fall, one of the main effects is that it destroys the shape of our soul such that even if pure fulfillment was right in front of us, we would not be in the right shape to be fulfilled by it. We are like upside down dinner plates trying to capture a stream of running water.

It's one of the strongest, most obvious effects of the fall that our desires are warped. Why do we not desire things that will heal and restore us? And further, and perhaps even more strangely, why do we desire things that will ultimately hurt us. That's very strange.

So when we say all our desires need to come under submission to

the lordship of Jesus Christ what we are really saying is that our desires need repair, healing and restoration. If one of the greatest expressions of humility is the submission of desires, one of the greatest expressions of pride is the dogged, unquestioning, loyalty to our desire. It's not even brought into question. Perhaps what I want is not what is best? Perhaps my desires and passions are not the best guide? Pride never asks those questions. It begins and ends with the unquestioned assumption that my desire is the prime meridian, the calibration point, the north star. Pride says to any challenger, "How in the world can you say that getting what I want is not good for me? Leave me alone. How dare you try to tell me what will make me happy? If there's one thing I know, it's what I need and want."

Well Paul in chapter 6 challenges that assumption in a big way. Every desire we have needs to come under the lordship of Christ, what we desire to do with our money, what we desire to do with our time, and what we desire to do in our relationships. Now in this last part of chapter 6 Paul gets even more pointed and personal and asks this really important, practical question, "What do I as a Christian do with my sexual desires?"

Now to help you understand what we are about to read, there's a little pattern you will see in the text. Paul knows who he's talking to. He knows what the word on the street is. He knows the messaging everyone is used to hearing. And so Paul begins by quoting some common saying of the day, and then he immediately responds to it. He's going to say, I know you've all heard the saying, "All things are lawful for me." But let me add are all those lawful things helpful? So you have this saying of the day followed by a rejoinder by Paul.

Paul just gets done saying, listen, you used to do anything you

wanted and it resulted in all sorts of sin. But you aren't like that any more. In Christ, you have been washed, sanctified, redeemed. And then he says this chapter 6 verse 12.

1 Corinthians 6:12-14, "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.

So if you look at the broad context here you'll see that Paul is going to talk about two ways of dealing with your sexual desire.

THREE VIEWS OF SEXUALITY

1. Sex is an Appetite to be Fed

So in this view, what do you do with your DESIRE? You let it guide you. You feed it. Trust what you want and go for it. You want sex. Then have sex.

Why? Because in this view, sex is just an appetite. When you need food, you eat. When you need sex, you have sex. Sex is just an appetite. You see this view when Paul says in verse 13, "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food."

And because it's just an appetite, it's lawful vs 12. What am I supposed to do? I can't stop my hunger for food until I eat, so of course it's lawful to eat. How is this any different? Isn't what we are experiencing just biological? I can't control amino acids and hormones and protein combinations that are causing these desires? Feeding my sexual desires is nothing more than that right?

What do you do with your desire? According to this view, let it be your guide as to what you need. Now the Greek's had an additional justification for this view.

You'll have to bear with me on a little bit of an interpretive side-note here. The punctuation isn't in the Greek so you have to determine it by context. So when you read this text you have to make an interpretation decision: which part is the Greek saying and which part is Paul's corrective instruction. The first part is obvious.

1 Corinthians 6:12-14, "*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.

So the part in quotes is the saying of the day and then the rejoinder to that is Paul's corrective instruction. So everyone agrees on this part. The second part is less obvious. Many of the translations don't attempt to punctuate it. They just leave it up to you to try and figure out. That's how the NAS and NKJ choose to handle this. Other translations attempt to punctuate. Here's how the ESV punctuates it.

"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.

So in this rendering, the common phrase of the day is "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food." And then Paul adds, but God will destroy both. In other word the destruction is a sort of judgment of God because the body is not meant for sexual immorality. That's one way to do it. But there's another way to punctuate it and that's how the NIV does it and I actually think the better of the two ways.

"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.

So in this rendering, the saying of the day went, "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food but hey man, god (lowercase g) will destroy them both" This saying fits perfectly the Greek understanding of the material world and the physical.

The Greek understanding was the material and physical world were temporary and not all that important. Therefore (at least in this view), it was a way of saying, "Look. If you need to have sex, you have sex. It's not what you do with your body. It's what you do with your soul that really matters spiritually."

So the Greeks had this way of justifying their desire. Man, desire is of the body which is going to be destroyed anyway so don't sweat it.

But whether you parse it out like the ESV or like the NIV, either way, the point is identical. What do I do with my sexual desire? Feed it. Do what you want.

So that's the first view.

THREE VIEWS OF SEXUALITY

1. Sex is an Appetite to be Fed
2. Sex is a Defilement to be Avoided

So in the first view what do you do with desire? You listen to it. In this second view what do we do with desire. You shove it. You suppress it.

Here's where we see this view in the text. It actually pops up at the top of chapter 7 but it's part of this same flow of thought.

1 Corinthians 7:1, Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman."

"It is good for a man not to touch a woman." That's pretty much the polar opposite view, but it too arises out of the Greek understanding that the material body is bad. In this view we are saying because the spirit is good and because the body is bad, sex is bad. It's dirty. Sex is defiling. We will concede the fact that it might be necessary for procreation, but in general, a holy person should abstain from it. But as much as possible what we need to do is suppress our sexual desires.

Both views, even though they are opposite, arise from the same belief that the a material world is bad, evil, temporary. It's kind of like throwing away an old TV. Some just chuck it with disinterest saying, "This thing is worthless." Others want to first take it out to the gun range and shoot it full of holes and then throw it away. Either way it's on it's way out. Both treatments come from a belief that the TV is worthless.

So those are the two views. 1. Sex is an Appetite to be Fed or 2. Sex is a Defilement to be Avoided

And honestly, we haven't progressed even a millimeter from these two views in 2000 years. These are basically the exact same views that we have today. Either you have people saying to you, "Are you kidding me? Don't put an ounce of energy into resisting this." Your desires are telling you what you need. Feed the appetite. This is what gave rise to the free love culture in the 70's. It has given rise to the hookup culture on campus today where everybody is just agreeing, "Hey, just relax. This is no big deal. It's just biology. There's nothing shameful here or intrinsically spiritual." Your life can be a whole lot easier if you stop starving yourself. Just eat.

And then you have others who hear that and shutter. And it gives rise to this opposite view. Sex is evil. We never talk about it. It gave rise to puritan understandings of prudishness. Just suppress. Just ignore. Make laws against it. Pretend it doesn't exist. There's no good way of talking about it so we just don't do it.

But as always, there's another way. There's God's way which works from a completely different angle with completely different assumptions and completely different goals.

God's Redemptive Plan

Paul gives us this revolutionary understanding of sexuality.

THREE VIEWS OF SEXUALITY

1. Sex is an Appetite to be Fed
2. Sex is a Defilement to be Avoided
3. Sex is an Gift to be Protected

So in the first view our sexual desire is to be obeyed. In the second view the sexual desire is to be suppressed. In this third view the sexual desire is to be submitted. Which means what?

- It means that we pay attention to our sexual desires but we recognize that it cannot direct us. Being led by sexual desire alone may be great or it may be harmful. We need those desires to be properly ordered and properly aligned according to a design.

What does the designer say about how the gift is to be used?

- What is to be avoided and what is to be embraced?
- What are the dangers in misuse of the gift?
- What do we do with our desires when they go against the design.

The big teaching point that comes out of this section is that God has a design that is to be followed and when obeyed will actually shape and even change our desires. Do you hear that come out in the language of the text? The body is not meant for sexual immorality.

That is a statement of design. God says, "I have a way that I designed sex to work, and if you choose to go against the design you wreck and ruin it." Don't think you can have it both ways because you can't. When you go against the design there are consequences.

You can't use your iPhone for a hammer and have a perfect screen. If you go to the Apple store with a cracked screen and say, "Hey the viewing experience on here is terrible, they will say. What do you expect? It was never designed for that." You can't have sex any way you want and be fulfilled by it the way God intends. Just like the viewing experience on the phone will be bad, the experience of sex will be bad.

And while it's true that sex itself will not be as enjoyable when we go against the design, that's not at all Paul's main point. He has a much larger concern.

Concern for the Soul

When Paul says, "The body is not meant for sexual immorality." He's trying to point out the deadly consequences that disobedience in the body has on the soul. The body is not meant to be used the way you are using it and there are ripples that extend into the soul. You think you can have it both ways and that's your problem. You are trying to act like what you do in the body has no effect on the soul. But they are inextricably linked.

You see this is so interesting because human desire is this perfect confluence of body and soul. When you go on a run and you start to sweat, what is that? Body or Soul? Well that is clearly body. When we contemplate self-awareness and the meaning of life, or feel deep

affection for another person well that is clearly soul.

But what is desire?. Is that body? Is that soul? You see desire lives in this intersection between the two. It reminds us that the body and the soul are connected. And if you try to cleave them apart bad things happen.

The Major Consequence of Compartmentalization

What are those consequences? There are probably dozens of things to say. But there is one thing we need to say today that will set us up for next week. This is the major principle we need to hear.

**SUBMITTING OUR DESIRES
SHAPES OUR SOULS TO RECEIVE
GOD'S GIFT**

Let me give you an analogy here. All children by default, if left to their own devices, would choose foods that would literally kill them. If you turned them loose at an all-you-can-eat buffet, they would eat only ice cream, gummy worms and soda.

Now let's just suppose, that you say as a parent, "Well, I'm not going to make my kid do anything he doesn't want to do. He knows what he needs. His desires will guide him."

This poor kid will be in a diabetic clinic by the age of 12 and probably have pancreatic failure by age 20. Why? Because your body wasn't designed for this. And it's conceivable that the spiral of sickness continues. If all your living for is the sugar high, well pretty soon sugar doesn't do it for you so what's next? Alcohol, maybe tobacco? Then marijuana which is a gateway into other drugs? Do you see where following untrained desires could lead?

I'm trying to make a point we could all relate with that what a child thinks is good for them and what is actually good for them are quite different. All of us are born with unhealthy desire for this good gift of sugar. We want too much in the wrong way. Now how do you fix that?

Well in this example, you begin feeding them good food. And by feeding them that good food, you give the body what it needs. And because the body is operating according to it's design and you tell your kids. I want you to pay attention to how you feel. I know when you eat sugar you get this instant feedback loop from the sugar-hit, but later there is a crash. Compare that to how you feel when you eat a really well-balanced meal. Overall, don't you feel so much better?

And over time, their desires change. Now as an adult, I don't desire junk food the way I used to? Why? Because my body isn't designed to thrive with that sort of diet. I actually just feel horrible. So let's apply this principle.

Health is gift? In order to receive that gift, you have to submit your desire for junk food and it's in that act of submission that you are able to receive the gift of health. You have to submit your desire to stay in bed and not exercise. But when you submit those desires, when you eat well, when you avoid sugar, when you exercise, you feel amazing and that shapes the way you think about food. As you live according to the design, you are shaped! The submission allow you to receive.

Do you see how this principle applies? Submitting our desires shapes our souls to receive God's gift.

When Paul says, "The body is not meant for sexual immorality" it's just like saying to a kid, "The body is not meant for cotton candy" he's saying, "your trying to experience health by avoiding exercise and eating pizza and pixie sticks." They body wasn't designed for that. The body is not designed for sexual immorality. That word sexual immorality in the Greek is the word pornea and you can hear we get our word pornography from it. Paul had a perfectly good Greek word for adultery he could have used but this is very broad word that means any kind of sexual behavior that is outside of God's plan.

Any kind of sexually behavior that is outside God's plan will ruin destroy his plan of joy that he has for you. But not only that it will destroy your soul. If you want to experience God's plan, you have to "Submit your desires which shapes your soul to receive God's gift."

The Greeks tried to get the best of both worlds by removing the rules. Man these rules are restricting. Sex is good but there's all these rules. How do we get rid of these rules that make this so difficult. Only in the context of marriage? Why would we do that? So

they cleave apart body and soul. There is nothing spiritually significant going on here. But the byproduct of separating body and soul is you empty meaning out of anything you do with the body. Sure it's convenient just like using your phone for a hammer is convenient. But there's consequences. You destroy the possibility for health.

God says, listen. The soul is important and so is the body and they are related. They are connected. What you do with your soul has repercussions in the body and what you do in the body has repercussions in the soul. Our desires are connected to our souls.

- As our souls are transformed our desires are transformed.
- Our experiences of pleasure in the body are connected to our minds which are connected to our souls.
- You can't cleave the body and soul apart as if they have no bearing on one another.

Does what we do in the mind/soul change the way we act in the body? - or - Does what we do in the body change the way we act in the mind/soul?

And while there is the primary direction (out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks) there's this back-eddy that works the other direction. As we experience the way we were designed to live, God blesses that. God allow us to experience health and it changes the way we think and believe.

So practically, God provides us grace to exercise our will in obeying with the mind we obey knowing it will spill over into actions. As God provides us grace to obey with the body we obey knowing it will spill over into the mind.

God says, I know you have desire for sex. I made that. I created that. But what do you do with that? Don't trust it instinctively. In order for it to be enjoyed you have to submit that desire to the designer. Sex is a gift to be enjoyed in the context of marriage. And I have reasons why I place that restriction on you is because it is through the restrictions that I make it special. It is elevated by restricting it. Things that are elevated are in that position to make transformational impact on the soul. They actually change the shape of the soul. So if you submit you are in the position to receive. Submitting our desires shapes our souls to receive God's gift.

Now speaking of submitted desires, Nate our family pastor here, has had a desire in his heart that he has submitted for a long time and it may be that God is ready to bless that submission and we wanted to give him a chance here to share with you all about that.