

The Heart of Sexual Sin

by Paul David Tripp

Paul David Tripp explores the complexities of sexual sin through the lens of worship, identity, and grace in a believer's life.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 6:12

Topics: "Sexual Purity", "Gospel Repentance"

Description

Paul David Tripp delivers a powerful sermon on the significance of sexuality in a culture that often prioritizes self-gratification over God's glory. He emphasizes that sexual sin is idolatrous, revealing who or what truly rules a person's life, and highlights the importance of understanding one's identity as a child of God to maintain sexual purity. Tripp explores how sexuality exposes the condition of a person's heart, the need for grace, and the necessity of connecting sexual struggles to larger gospel themes to find victory through biblical repentance and dependency on Jesus Christ.

Transcript

In a culture that looks at self as ultimate, God as absent, and pleasure as the highest experience, it is no wonder that sexuality has become such a dominant force.

Sex provides a powerful pathway to instant physical pleasure. It can provide a powerful form of false worship (counterfeiting the first great command) and false relationship (counterfeiting the second great command).

It is impossible to arrive at a balanced view of sexuality without abandoning a philosophy that leaves God out and makes human satisfaction its primary focus.

Biblical Foundations for Sexuality

Several fundamental biblical truths are foundational to a biblical understanding of sexuality:

First, sex is a key way that a person expresses worship. Romans 1:18-27 portrays sex as a principal way in which a person reveals who or what is really ruling his life. Sexual sin is by its very nature idolatrous--that is, it is a place where we refuse to live for God's glory, where we exchange worship and service of the Creator for worship and service of the created thing (v. 25).

Sexual sin is driven by the sinful desires of the heart rather than a desire to live by God's principles for His pleasure. It is a place where a person exchanges the protection and freedom of God's truth for a host of self-serving lies.

It is significant that when Paul talks about the sinner's rejection of God's revelation and glory, the primary fruits he discusses are inordinate sexual desire and sinful sexual behavior (vv. 26-28).

Sex is presented in Scripture as a principal way a person expresses his submission to or rebellion against God. A person either submits his heart and body to God's higher agenda, or else uses heart and body to get what is pleasurable when and where he wishes.

Christians need to see that life is worship. From this perspective, a person is either living actively in covenant with God--hoping in His promises, obeying His commands, relying on His grace, and desirous of His glory--or they are living in an idol covenant where some aspect of the creation has replaced the Creator and personal pleasure and the glory of self has been enthroned.

Second, sex is a key way a person expresses their identity (1 Cor. 6:12-20). The question is, "Will I live out my identity as a creature of God (and for the believer, as a child of God) or will I live as my own god with no higher agenda than my own satisfaction?"

In 1 Corinthians 6 Paul places his entire discussion of sexual immorality in the context of the true identity of the believer. It is as if Paul is saying, "If you are ever going to remain sexually pure, you must understand who you are as a child of God, and you must make choices that flow from that identity."

There are four statements of identity in that passage that provide wonderful boundaries in which to live, not only in the area of sexuality, but in every area of life. The Christian's identity is fourfold:

I am a servant of Christ. "Everything is permissible for me, but I will not be mastered by anything." Christ has freed His children from bondage to the cravings of the sinful nature, not to self-directed liberty but to the wonderful freedom found only as they accept their slavery to Him. Our sexual lives will express either a joyful submission to Christ or an allegiance to another master.

I am an eternal being. "By His power God raised the Lord from the dead, and He will raise us also." The identity of believers reminds them that this life is not all there is. Neither the sufferings nor the pleasures of this present moment are worthy to be compared with the glory that is to come. A future hope changes the way believers look at the pressures, opportunities, and responsibilities of the moment. They live patiently, not for the seen but for the unseen, and conscious of the eternal value of every sacrifice they make in the present.

I am one with Christ. "Do you know that your bodies are members of Christ Himself? He who unites himself with the Lord is one with Him in spirit." We must never think or act as if it is just ourselves alone. Everything we do must consider Christ, for our union with Him is eternal. Since our spirits are one with Him, our bodies belong to Christ as well. We are one with Christ. To act any other way is to deny the gospel.

I am the property of Christ. "You are not your own; you were bought with a price. Therefore honor God with your body." God bought us on Calvary when He paid the price with the blood of His Son. We belong to Him. We do not belong to us! Whenever we act as if our lives belong to us and we can do what we want when we want, we deny our identity as the children of God. If we are owned, our obligation and joy is to

please our Owner.

Understanding the true nature of our identity as a believer provides boundaries that promote sexual purity and expose sexual immorality and speak with power to the realities of sexual struggle.

A believer must not let himself be mastered by anything other than Christ, and we realize that sex can be a life-dominating master. We will not let ourselves live for just this moment, and we realize that sex creates a narrow focus on present pleasure with little awareness of the future. We will not allow ourselves to function in independence, and we realize that sex draws us to meditate on what we want and "need." We will not allow ourselves to function from a position of ownership, and we realize that sex is often about power, control, ownership, and entitlement.

Third, sexuality is a key revealer of a person's heart (Eph. 5:3-7). In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ declares sexuality to be an issue of the heart, "Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. 5:28). It is not enough to say, "Because I have not physically committed adultery, therefore I am pure," for lust itself breaks the command against committing adultery.

There is another way of saying this: A person's behavior in the area of sex is a key revealer of what is ruling his heart.

Paul states it very plainly in Ephesians 5:5: the sexually immoral person is an idolater. Sex always involves the thoughts, motives, desires, demands, expectations, treasures, or idols of the heart. When we deal with sexual sin, it is not enough to simply avoid committing acts of physical immorality. We must uncover the heart sins that acts of physical immorality reveal.

Finally, sexuality is a key revealer of our need for grace (Rom. 7:7-25). As we examine ourselves in light of God's standard of absolute purity, we are forced to exclaim with Paul, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells (7:18a).

It is when I am confronted with my utter inability to meet the demands of God's standard that I am also confronted with the reality and majesty of His grace. "Where sin increased, grace increased all the more" (Romans 5:20).

In this way, our sexuality reveals our profound need for the inner power and desire to obey God that comes only from God. God's call to sexual purity is as impossible for us to achieve without His help as it would have been for us to save ourselves.

Conclusion

It is vital that believers connect their sexual struggles to these larger gospel themes at work in their lives. In what ways has the truth of God been exchanged for a lie? Where has the worship and service of the Creator been exchanged for worship and service of the created thing? By exposing the idolatry and self-love that is at the heart of sexual sin, the need for Christ is clearly demonstrated.

Biblical repentance (Joel 2:12ff) that includes not merely an external focus, but an inward "rending of the heart" is the only pathway to victory. Here the lies of self-sufficiency and self-righteousness are exposed, and here the believer can learn both to mourn his sin and revel in God's liberating grace. Through this process, believers develop a new dependency on Jesus Christ and love for Him that will empower and

sustain their progress to sexual freedom. In this way, sexual struggles present us with an opportunity to make the hope of the gospel a reality.

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