

Author: Patrick J. Griffiths ©
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Title: The Cross and Moral Purity - D
An Overview of 1 Corinthians 1-10: Part VI – Chapters 5-7
Text: Misc.
Theme: There is hope, healing, and wholeness to be found in Jesus Christ.

For those who find themselves slaves to their fleshly appetites I want to show you the better way. Jesus Christ is better than anything else that exists including immoral pleasure.

ILLUSTRATION:

Many of us have had the experience of filling up with fuel only to drive away without putting the gas cap back on. Perhaps you can relate the following experience.

An individual filled his car with gas at a self-service gas station. After he had paid and driven away, he realized that he had left the gas cap on top of his car. He stopped and looked and, sure enough, it was lost.

Well, he thought for a second and realized that other people must have done the same thing, and that it was worth going back to look by the side of the road since even if he couldn't find his own gas cap, he might be able to find one that fit. Sure enough, he hadn't been searching long when he found a gas cap. He tried it on, and it went into place with a satisfying click.

"Great," he thought, "I lost my gas cap, but I found another one that fits. And this one's even better because it locks..."

That man's problems were not solved by his immediate solution. I want to show you the better way. Yet what we are fighting against is nothing new. It is as old as the Garden.

Henry Scougal died in 1657. Before his death he wrote to encourage a friend and stimulate his spiritual life. What he wrote came to be known as The Life of God in the Soul of Man. It is considered to be a timeless classic. In it he wrote these words:

"I could pine and macerate my body, and undergo many hardships and troubles; but I cannot get all my corruptions starved, nor my affections wholly weaned from earthly things: there is still some worldly desires lurking in my heart, and those vanities that I have shut out of the doors are always getting in by the windows." (92)

This is what we are up against. Yet the battle for us has been won at the cross. Victory is ours. Everything we have already noted is still true. You and I cannot subtract from the fullness of Christ's work in behalf of His people.

Let me suggest three barriers that keep us from fully enjoying what is already ours.

First, our own fallen sin nature keeps us from fully enjoying what is already ours. Our sin nature restricts us from fully enjoying all that He is, all that He has done, and all that we now are in Him. Let us suppose you are living a consistent Christian life and let us suppose that you think you are doing really well. Even when you think everything is going great, you are still not enjoying fully what is already yours and the reason is because you have a fallen sin nature.

Second, our own ignorance keeps us from fully enjoying what is already ours. Our ignorance restricts us from fully enjoying all that He is, all that He has done, and all that we now are in Him. We are Bible illiterate. An emotional response of joy or happiness or contentment is a result of mind renewal. It is not a result of your circumstances. Whatever you think is making you unhappy is not the real cause of your unhappiness. Your ignorance of all that He is, all that He has done, and all that you now are in Him is what restricts you from fully enjoying what is already yours.

ILLUSTRATION:

What you do not know will hurt you. Ignorance is not bliss when it comes to who Jesus is, what He has done, and who we now are in Him.

Third, our own sinful choices keep us from fully enjoying what is already ours. When we chose sin we are saying that the sin is doing something for me that Jesus cannot do. Our sinful choices say that what we have in Him is deficient. During those initial advancements into sinful choices we are turning our backs to God's abundance.

ILLUSTRATION:

Have you ever had someone throw a ball at you only to be struck in the head simply because you were not ready to catch it or perhaps you had your back turned to the thrower?

As believers when we sin God is still throwing but we are not catching. Either we are not paying attention or we have turned our backs to Him, but He is still throwing everything at us.

With all of this said, let us again look at some general guidelines for promoting biblical morality and protecting against unbiblical immorality.

I. General guidelines for promoting biblical sexuality and protecting against unbiblical immorality.

I recognize that I have a lot of introductory material, but it is necessary in order that we do not fall prey to legalistic nonsense. There is a big difference between the supposed Christian life and the Christ life. Just as there is a difference between gold plating and something that is solid gold.

The biblical guidelines being proposed this morning are not legalistic. They do not make you more justified. You are not climbing the spiritual ladder of success by embracing biblical morality. Nothing you are called upon to believe is a work of the flesh. What you are doing is pursuing Christ and as a consequence of this pursuit, you obey God, reveal Christ to a Christ-less world, and protect yourself and others from a life of pain and hurt.

Before we look at these general guidelines I believe we need to note the position we are working from, not for.

A. This is what we look like in Him.

1. In Christ, you and I are already holy (1 John 4:17).

1 John 4:17 By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world.

Although we can never change God's view of us or dealings with us, it is possible through moral defilement to place ourselves in a compromised position in horizontal relationships and in our ability to have an audience before others in our ministry for Him.

God does purify His people so that through the cross we have unrestricted access before Him unconditionally (James 4:8, 1 Pet. 1:22). It is only because we are pure because of the cross we can live morally pure in an impure world. The call throughout the New Testament is to practice and portray the power of the cross in our placement positionally.

2. Because of who He is and what He has done, we will win (Jude 24, 25, 1 Thess. 5:23, 24).

Jude 24-25 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

1 Thess. 5:23-24 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.

Our battle with lust is not to gain victory. We are not working for victory, but from victory. No matter how bruised and battered you might appear to be and how speculative the end might be, your finish is certain. Nothing can rob you of what He has secured by means of His death, resurrection, and present intercessory ministry.

ILLUSTRATION:

"In Hawaii, because of the time difference with the Continental U.S., the National Football League Monday night football game is played in mid-afternoon; so the local TV station delays its telecast till 6:30 in the evening. If your favorite team plays, you can listen to the game on the radio, which broadcasts it live. Then, because they are your favorite team, you'll watch the game on television too. If you know your team has won the game, it influences how you watch it on television. If your team fumbles the ball or throws an interception, it's not a problem. You just think, 'That's bad, but it's okay. In the end, we'll win.'"

In your battle against lust, if you are wondering how the end will look, God's team wins!

3. Your failure is not final. God's purpose in and through your failure is being fulfilled (Gen. 50:20).

When you fail, see it for what it is. Failure is pushing you to embrace your weakness and in so doing see His strength. This is not soft peddling sin or its horrific consequences, but it is putting sin in its place. Do not give sin more credit, honor, or attention than it deserves. Sin has a role and it is to function inside of its role. When you make it something that it is not, you are making more of it than you should.

"The best evidence of spiritual maturity in Joseph's life is his ability to relate all the experiences of his life, good and bad, to the sovereign will of God." (Baker Commentary on the Bible, "Genesis," Victor P. Hamilton, 37)

You are never to give up the fight, but the fight is to see Him as all sufficient and not simply to say no to sinful lusts. **Our focus is too simplistic and bland when all we do is try not to sin.** Listen to how Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

18 **while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen;** for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Sin's desire is to make us look at the temporal when our victory is found in looking at the eternal.

Listen also to Hebrews 12:1, 2.

1 Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

2 **fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith,** who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Again, because this is true, this is what it will look like in the lives of His people. Now let us look at what the Scripture notes as commands. These commands are addressing our ability to chose. This is what God is working in you and through you to those around you. We cannot forget Philippians 2:12, 13.

12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.**

There are seven actions I desire to note in this study.

B. This is what He looks like in us.

There is continuity between the various points we will consider in this study. Where one stops and one begins is sometimes difficult to determine.

1. Run away from immorality (1 Cor. 6:18).

Often we find ourselves having an internal struggle. We attempt to justify or argue for the validity of our immoral choices. Our greatest threat is ourselves.

ILLUSTRATION:

“We have met the enemy, and they are us.” This is a twist on Oliver Hazard Perry’s words after a naval battle: “We have met the enemy, and they are ours.” The updated version was first used in the comic strip “Pogo,” by Walt Kelly, in the 1960s and referred to the turmoil caused by the Vietnam War.

Friend, God has woven into sin an inherent demerit. I do not believe God will directly punish you for your sinful choices, but I do believe you will be punished and God is the one orchestrating the providential consequences of your sinful choices. If we could see the pain involved in our sinful choices, we would never chose sin.

Sin will always take us further than we want to go, keep us longer than we want to stay, and cost us more than we want to pay. By running to Christ you are running away from immorality.

2. Be protective of compromising situations (Rom. 14:13, 16).

Guard yourself and others from becoming a stumbling block in their pursuit of Christ. Celebrate the genders without making provision for the flesh (Rom. 14:13). Romans 14 is not dealing with morality, but the principles it sets forth inside of the Christian fellowship are applicable to this area.

Sometimes it is possible to inadvertently be crossing lines of proper etiquette between genders. Do not let your good be evil spoken of (Rom. 14:16). I am allowing this verse to have certain flexibility by way of application.

No matter how innocent your motive might be, you have to realize that there is always a bigger audience. In all communication there is a conflict of interests that has to be overcome. The first is what and how something is said and the other is what and how something is heard. The same is true with our actions.

No one can judge your motives, thus what you say or do have to be taken at face value. Yet such speech and actions do not operate in a neutral vacuum. Everything is being interpreted and understood in a context. The context is provided by the physical world in which we live and the world created by the sender and the receiver. This is just as true with our gestures and actions and words towards other people.

We are a family and as brothers and sisters in Christ there is a wholesome and holy expression that can exist between genders, but it must also be guarded. How heartbreaking it would be if our good intentions were used for the destruction of an individual or this body. I believe Ralph Earle states well this principle.

Although we have tremendous liberty in Christ “we should not selfishly glory in our religious freedom in such a way as to cause a weaker, overscupulous brother to stumble and fall. True love will put the interests of others before our own.” (Earle, Word Meanings in the New Testament, 209).

3. Do not yield the members of your body as instruments of unrighteousness (Rom. 6:12, 13).

We are not to allow sin to rule as king in our lives.

Do not put yourself in compromising situations. The word used in Matthew 5:29 for stumbling and in Romans 14:13 are the same.

Matthew 5:29 "If your right eye makes you **stumble**, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

Romans 14:13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this--not to put an **obstacle or a stumbling block** in a brother's way.

It is our English word “scandal.” What is a scandal? The idea is that of baiting a trap. Of creating a situation whereby another person might be caught. Sometimes we are inadvertently setting people up for a fall. We must be careful for them.

In our English language notice how this word plays out.

“A scandal involves widely publicized allegations of wrong-doing, disgrace or moral outrage. **A scandal may be based on reality, or the product of false allegations.**” en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scandal

How tragic when something imaginary is brought against another person in the body of Christ. Such actions, if not guarded, would be scandalous.

I believe the idea of Matthew 5:27-30 is captured by the apostle Paul in Romans 6:12 and 13. Do not give in to sin. Stop yielding to it. The thought in Romans 6 is that we are not to place at the disposal of sin’s gratification our bodily instruments. Our bodies are tools/instruments and we should resist against using them for the fulfillment of immorality.

Make the hard calls – learn to say no (Prov. 1:10). Sometimes some things start out good but in time go bad. When this happens you have to say no and walk away from it.

ILLUSTRATION:

It is like food that has gone bad in the refrigerator. No matter how much you might like the food, there does come a point when you have to throw it away.

4. Know when you have crossed the line and cut it out (Matt. 5:27-30).

I believe there are interpretive problems to this passage, but the basic principle can stay constant. Whatever is causing you to fall should be cut off. We are to cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the flesh and spirit (2 Cor. 7:1).

2 Corinthians 7:1 therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

The word “defilement” is used only here (noun). It speaks of a stain. The verb is used three times in the New Testament (1 Cor. 8:7, Rev. 3:4, 14:4). 1 John 3:1-3 uses a different word, but the idea is seen. Both passages speak of promise and hope, of something that is yet future and unfulfilled. In light of this future unfulfilled promise we are to live pure lives. Both passages speak of God’s people taking the appropriate actions in order to remove personal and relational stain. “A complete break is to be made with defilement.” (Rogers & Rogers)

5. Make a covenant with your eyes not to look at people with lust (Job 31:1).

Job 31:1 "I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin?"

Job was an elderly believer. He made sure that when he looked at someone, his thoughts were guarded by guarding what he looked at.

It is easy to make small concessions, but such concessions lead to event failure. Although we give ground in the arena of our minds such allowances are real breakdowns and we must fight against these small allowances. Each one of these breakdowns is robbing us of a purer joy that is to be found in Christ.

6. Love God first and foremost and as a result of this, love your neighbor as you would yourself (Matt. 22:34-40).

Matthew 22:34-40

34 But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together.

35 One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him,

36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"

37 And He said to him, "'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.'

38 "This is the great and foremost commandment.

39 "The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'

40 "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

The point of the text "is not to distinguish faculties and powers, but to insist on a complete response." (Earle, Word Meanings in the New Testament, 44).

Biblical purity must fill the no of abstinence with a resounding yes of Christ's sufficiency.

ILLUSTRATION:

Let us say that you have a choice to make between your favorite food and something you would tolerate if eaten. Which one would you choose? For me, if I have pizza placed before me or a plate of some kind of saucy noodles, well . . . the pizza would win every time. I am so satisfied with the pizza that the saucy noodles would not stand a chance of winning. The only way the saucy noodles would win is if something was terribly wrong.

This is the way it is with Christ. Christ is to be so satisfying to us that the choice of sin slowly loses its grip on our lives.

Often the pursuit of biblical purity is a negative proposal, but just the opposite is true. If we are not being satisfied in Christ, then our ability to resist sin becomes greatly impeded.

Why does God say no to moral impurity? Is it because He is seeking to withhold from us something that is good? On the contrary, God wants us to experience the joy of who He is that is found in being morally pure.

Your goal is not to be morally pure. If all we strive after is moral purity, then it is a fight against the will. Your goal is to seek Christ and to find Him all satisfying.

ILLUSTRATION:

In the Ford Motor Company's executive dining room, Henry Ford II rarely ate anything but hamburgers. According to Lee Iacocca, Ford complained that his own personal chef at home couldn't make a decent burger. In fact, no one made burgers as perfect as the ones at the executive dining room. Curious, Iacocca asked the establishment's chef to show him what he did to make Ford so happy with his burgers. The chef went to the fridge, grabbed an inch-thick slab of New York strip steak, ran it through a grinder, patted up a patty and tossed it on the grill. "Amazing what you can cook up when you start with a [ten]-dollar hunk of meat," said the chef with a sly smile.

When you have tasted what God has for us in His Son Jesus Christ, then your appetite for things created soon lose their taste.

7. Finally, today's triumph is not sufficient for tomorrow's battle (1 Pet. 5:8, Job 1:7).

Although our end is certain and although we are working from victory not for victory, the Christian life is still a battle and our opponent is out to destroy us.

"Confidence in God must not lead to slackness; the spiritual warfare that they wage demands vigilance." (Rogers & Rogers)

The devil is a relentless foe who will stop at nothing short of our demise. The devil is walking about. He is roaming with intent to devour. The devil is trying to catch you off guard.

He is a crafty opponent. It is the devil's desire to put you to the test. His mission is to destroy you and your testimony for the Lord. The devil is determined to bring you down. He is a formidable opponent. He will not give up.

When our Lord was attacked by the devil in the wilderness it says that after Satan's immediate defeat he left our Lord "for a season. (Luke 4:13)". The phrase "for a season" speaks of a measure of time. Our Lord's battle with the devil was not final. The devil left, but would return when the opportunity afforded itself to strike again.

Every day you need to be in hot pursuit of Him.

ILLUSTRATION:

I do not have a cat but I do have dogs. As I understand life with cats giving them medicine can be a bit tricky. Dogs on the other hand are different. I really do not think one of my dogs even breathes with he eats. I think he

simply looks at it and its gone. If I tape him and slow the process down, then I think you can actually capture the process. If we need to give the dogs medicine we simply put it in their food.

I wish absorbing spiritual truth was like feeding food to a dog. What God is offering us is rest, contentment, and future glory. It is yours already all you have to do is believe it.

APPLICATION: (Where do we go from here?)

1. Be morally pure. If you are presently engaged in sinful activity, then stop. Stop making provision for the flesh.
2. If you are engaged in questionable activity, then stop. Small compromises create large falls.
3. Be accountable. You cannot fly solo when it comes to defeating immorality. You must find another person of the same gender to be your accountability partner.
4. Find your satisfaction in Christ. Jesus Christ is enough in this life and in the life to come and this includes our sexuality. Read your Bible, memorize the Scripture, get involved in ministry, attend church, and be a part of a small group.
5. Moral purity is not just about you. It is about us and ultimately Him. Let us keep our eyes on Him.