

Freedom

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[0 : 00] Well, hey, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. You can check us out at FCCGreensburg.com or on our Facebook page, FCC Greensburg.

But thank you so much for tuning in today to this audio broadcast. And I just pray that God will take his word and use it in your life and mine today to mold us and shape us more into the image of Christ.

Now, let me ask you this. Have you ever been in a situation where some kind of conflict happened and you knew you had to deal with it, where you had to maybe confront someone about something or maybe they had to confront you about something, or possibly you both had some issues with each other that had to be hashed out.

Sometimes they work out great where there was just a misunderstanding, an honest mistake that Satan tried to stir up and misconstrue. And after the truth actually came out, you walked out of that room as friends.

But I think most of us have also been in the ones that didn't turn out so well, where usually due to our pride, it gets ugly, words are exchanged, and a relationship is wounded.

[1 : 14] I feel safe in saying that none of us like that kind of conflict for at least these two reasons. Because number one, it's personal. And second, it's heavy.

Now, those two words, personal and heavy, describe well this message today. It's personal because it affects each of us in one way or another.

And this message is also going to deal with a pretty heavy topic. But I think before we go any further, there must be some parameters that we set in place as Christians.

The first one has been true of this church for 191 years. When John O'Kane and John P. Thompson rang the courthouse bell just a few blocks from where we are currently located to start the Christian church in 1832, this was their foundation.

And they made it clear that this church would be founded on the truth of God's word alone. That man's wisdom, man's creeds, man's doctrines fail, but God's truth brings freedom.

[2 : 19] So if you're a believer, you have been set free because of the truth of God's word that led you to repentance and baptism in Jesus Christ. And therefore, you align yourself under the word of God and what he says is truth is settled regardless of what I want to believe and regardless of what the world around me says.

Now, the second parameter is love. Like the word teaches, we are to preach the truth in love. And that kind of respect and that dignity for even those who may disagree will be shown by me today.

Now, some of you right now are like, oh my, what is he going to talk about? Like what bombshell is Ray going to drop on us? And maybe I've overhyped it a bit, but today we're going to talk about sexual immorality, which is always personal and always heavy.

Before we do that, let me set the stage a little bit. We're already in the fifth week of our series called The Power of Unity. Paul is writing to a church that he started and that he loves, but they need some discipline.

They are walking in the flesh and not in the spirit. They are looking more like the world around them than they're looking like Jesus. They're still on the spiritual baby bottle when it's time to start eating real spiritual food.

[3 : 42] Drunken debauchery, sexual immorality, divisive fighting in the church. And many of them just don't really seem to care.

So we see Paul remind them of their true identity in Christ that should call them back to a life of holiness. We see him deal with false wisdom and point them back to the cross.

We witness some leaders being made idols and others being disrespected. And Paul teaches them what healthy leadership really looks like. They were even suing one another instead of dealing with conflict God's way.

And now Paul deals with this subject of sexual immorality. And to understand why this was so prevalent is to understand the city he was writing to, the church in the city of Corinth.

This city was known for their temple devoted to the false goddess of love, Aphrodite. Every day thousands of men would make their march to the temple that had female priests.

[4 : 44] And their worship is basically what we would call prostitution. And this sexual immorality permeated this culture. And while our world may not be exactly the same, Peter Kreeft, the professor of philosophy at Boston College, put it this way.

He said, sex is the effective religion of our culture. So when I say biblically grounded phrases like, God designed one man and one woman to be united in a monogamous relationship.

When I say that living together and having sex outside of marriage goes against the heart of God. And all statistics show that it ends in a much higher divorce rate. When I say that lust and pornography are hazardous and ruin so many marriages and relationships.

When I say God knew what he was doing when he made you as a male or a female. When I say those phrases, listen, it's not done with a heart of anger towards anyone. It's simply the truth that we as the church of Jesus Christ in a lost world must be set apart.

We have to look different than the world around us. And yet still love, not the worldly definition, but the godly definition of love.

[5 : 59] Still love anyone who may disagree with those biblical statements without compromising the truth. But most importantly, when we say and we live those statements, that's a declaration that God is God and I am not.

That his ways are right and pure and I as his follower will follow him in obedience. That he is the God who breaks the chain of sin and sets us on the solid rock so we can walk in freedom.

That when he steers us away from something, it's because he loves us. And like a good parent, he knows what's best for us. And one more thing before we jump right into this passage, this letter is written to believers with the notion that you've already been set free by the amazing grace of Jesus Christ.

And with that salvation comes a heart that wants to fully surrender to the Lord and that wants to follow him and his truth. See, while morals are morals for everyone, this message today is intended for believers.

Because for those who don't know Jesus, this probably isn't the starting point. Until they come to know the truth and the Holy Spirit resides in them, this message will seem crazy and bigoted and everything else you want to call it.

[7 : 22] Now, let's find our way to 1 Corinthians 6 as we talk about the consequences that sexual sin can bring into our lives. And listen, I know we're blessed to have a good mix of every generation in our church.

And maybe you're to an age where this may not be a struggle for you any longer. But please know that you can take what God's Word teaches and you can help generations younger than you.

But I do think this applies to all of us, whether we struggle ourselves or maybe we have a family member who battles this in some form or fashion. So first, if you have your outline, and don't forget, if you have a phone and you can get apps on that, this is a free app.

You can go to the App Store and you can download it. It's called YouVersion, Y-O-U Version Bible App. It's free. Go to the menu, go to events, go to First Christian Church of Greensburg, Indiana, and then you will see this outline if you'd like to follow along.

So here's the first thing I want you to see. Sexual sin harms us. You know, another way to put it, sexual sin has some awful consequences that affect us and they affect the people around us in major ways.

[8 : 39] So let's start here in the second half of 1 Corinthians 6, verse 9, second half of that verse, and we'll go into verse 12.

Through the Holy Spirit's leading, here's what the Apostle Paul says, Do not be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who have sex with men, which is another way of saying homosexuality, nor thieves, nor greedy, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.

And that is what some of you were, Paul says, but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God. Now look at verse 12.

He says, I have the right to do anything you say, but not everything is beneficial. Now scholars have wrestled with this statement a little bit, but in this statement that says, I have the right to do anything, or as others have translated it, all things are lawful.

And most think it was probably a common phrase said in the Corinthian culture. And you may think you have the right to do this. It's my body. It's my choice. A phrase you hear a lot in our culture.

[9 : 54] And yet, if you belong to Jesus, like we talked about last week, it's not your body and your choice, because everything you are belongs to Him, and it's used to glorify Him.

So you have become a slave to righteousness, and you have become a steward, a manager of what He's entrusted to you. So yeah, it may be lawful. You may have the free will to act upon it, but it's not beneficial.

It's not profitable. It's not even behavior suitable for someone who has been bought with a price and covered by the blood of Jesus. Now, where else do you see that word profit?

I think about Mark 8, 36. From the ESV, it says, For what does it profit a man that gained the whole world and forfeit his very soul? See, when we say, I can do whatever I want, I'm not hurting anybody else, I'll tell you what, that's just a lie the first time that Satan inspired it, okay?

Because sexual sin is harmful to ourselves and to everyone around us. It affects others. John MacArthur put it this way. He said, And as if that's not enough, okay, when it makes its way into the church, like in Corinth, or like we hear about all the time, it not only causes chaos and destruction within the body, but it takes our eyes off of why we exist in the first place.

[11 : 37] And that is to love God, to love people, and to make disciples of Jesus. Now, here's the second thing I want you to see. So, sexual sin not only harms us, but it controls us.

So, let's look here at 1 Corinthians 6, 12 again, and focus now on the second part of that verse. Paul says, I have the right to do anything you say, but not everything is beneficial.

We just talked about that. And then he says, I have the right to do anything, but I will not be mastered by anything. And Paul even goes on to put it like this in Romans 6, 14.

He says, For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but you are now under grace. The Lord wants us to walk in grace, to walk in His freedom, to walk in the Holy Spirit's leading and power over our lives.

And yet, when sexual sin controls us, and that's exactly what it does, it takes over. And in the words of this anonymous quote, sin will take you farther than you want to go, it'll keep you longer than you want to stay, and it'll cost you more than you want to pay.

[12 : 48] So think about that when it comes to a young boy, a young girl who's introduced to pornography. Those are the images that you'll never get out of your mind that can control you and put these unreal expectations and false views of intimacy in your mind that can be extremely dangerous for future relationships.

It can control you and shape you in so many unhealthy ways. Or, when sexual intimacy is introduced into a relationship before God's appointed time, outside of marriage, it can so easily blind us to what a relationship should be built upon.

It's easy to make that the focus when instead it should be that deep compatibility. It should be that friendship that's founded in a relationship with Jesus Christ. And then in marriage, when that intimacy is introduced, man, it only deepens that relationship and takes it to a whole new level.

Because how many marriages have we all seen where the foundation was obviously sex and within a year or two or maybe three, the marriage has fizzled because we didn't build it on the right foundation.

And while we can understand that that happens in the world, sadly, it's happening way too much in the church of Jesus Christ because sexual sin harms us and it controls us.

[14 : 08] And then third, sexual sin perverts God's purposes. Let's head back to 1 Corinthians 6, verse 13 and into 14.

Here's what it says. You say, food for the stomach and stomach for the food and God will destroy them both. So once again, this is a Corinthian saying. The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord and the Lord for the body.

By his power, God raised the Lord from the dead and he will raise us also. So these Corinthians very much viewed their time on earth as this is all there is. They had a philosophy on life that may sound a lot like people today.

If you got an itch, scratch it. Sexual urges satisfy them. Need to relax? Tip the bottle back. Smoke that joint. Whatever. Somebody messes with you, you mess them up.

And in everything, live it up because this is all there is. And yet, that mentality often leads to more depression, selfishness, pride, discontentment, and all kinds of wickedness.

[15 : 13] And this is where Paul is reminding them and us that because you have Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you have hope. On this earth, you have the Holy Spirit living inside of you, guiding you, strengthening you, comforting you through everything life will throw your way.

And when this life comes to an end or if Jesus comes back first, you'll have a hope greater than your mind can imagine. And as the famous hymn by Albert E. Brumley says, just a few more weary days and then I'll fly away.

To a land where joy shall never end, I'll fly away. And a part of that hope in Christ is that he has a purpose for my life grander than my eight to five job or bingo night on Thursday.

He not only wants to transform my life as I pursue Christ, but he wants to use me as the anonymous quote says, I'm just one beggar telling another beggar where I found food.

As a sinner saved by grace, telling others about a God who loves them so much that he took their sin upon himself. And when God's children get caught up in sexual sin, not only can it harm us, and this just isn't sexual sin, but that's what Paul's talking about specifically in this passage, but when we get caught up in sexual sin and just any sin and we get addicted to that, it can harm us, it can harm those around us, but not only does it control us, but it keeps us from living out the purpose that God has created us to fulfill.

[16 : 49] Now, this is the point in the message where I'm going to guess that some people may feel a little beaten down. This may be offensive to some, even though that's never my heart. That was never my intention.

I tried to preach the truth with a heart of love, but maybe you are struggling in this area and Satan is just pouring shame all over your head right now.

Maybe you want to break the chains, but your willpower isn't enough, and you always find yourself back in that same spot. And while sexual sin promises so much satisfaction, it's short-lived and it leaves you longing for so much more.

I want to tell you a story that some of you will remember because I shared it at our welcome home service at the fairgrounds a couple years back, but I really believe the Lord has put this on my heart again.

A well-known preacher in our country tells the story about when he was in college. He went to a college-age service at a big church where there were hundreds of college kids there.

[17 : 55] The pastor came out to preach, had a rose in his hand, and he said, you know what? I love roses. I love how they smell. I love how soft they feel.

And most of all, they're beautiful. And then he said, in fact, I want each of you, talking to all these college kids, to feel and smell this beautiful rose. So he throws it out in a sea of college kids, and he asked them to pass it around while he was speaking.

And as he's talking about sexual sin, like we have today, he went on a little differently than I did. He approached it more with the spirit of condemnation.

He was a little strong, just kind of just screaming at these kids over the mistakes they had made, just beating them up over it. And finally, at the end, he asked, who has my rose?

And this college boy comes up to the stage and he hands it to him. But at this point, it's not pretty anymore. The petals have fallen off being handled so much. The stem is broken.

[18 : 57] And he looked these students in the eyes and he said, who would want this kind of rose? And this young college student who would someday preach before thousands, but at this point, he's a college student, he said that his blood started to boil and he wanted so badly to jump up and punch this guy right in the nose, man, because as he's screaming at them, who would ever want this rose?

And all he could think to say, even though he didn't say anything because he didn't want to be rude, but all he wanted to stand up and scream out was, Jesus does. Jesus wants that rose.

That's the very reason he came to this earth is because he saw us in our pits, in our sin, in our struggles, and loved us so much that he would endure one of the worst forms of execution so he could take our place to pay the price our sins demand, and that includes sexual sin.

That, my friends, is what true love looks like, and that true love changes us and calls us to live a life pursuing holiness in Christ.

So, maybe you do struggle with same-sex attraction. Maybe you live with your girlfriend or boyfriend. Maybe you struggle to look at and watch pornography, stuff you shouldn't.

[20 : 17] Maybe your eyes wander and stay places they don't need to be. Maybe you're having that secret affair, whether it's physical or just emotional at this point, or whatever the case is, is it okay?

The world will say, yeah, man, you got an itch, scratch it. You just, just live life. But that's not what God's Word teaches. It's absolutely not okay for a follower of Jesus.

But there's hope. There's forgiveness. There's grace. And that happens when we lay it down at the foot of the cross. So, let me take just this last five or six minutes and answer this question with you.

How do we overcome sexual sin and walk in freedom? How do we overcome sexual sin and walk in the freedom that God has called us to?

Two things. Number one, flee. Run. Flee. And number two, focus. Focus. And let's finish out this passage here in 1 Corinthians 6, verse 18.

[21 : 23] Paul says, flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually sins against their own body. Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God?

You are not your own, he says. You were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies. Man, he calls our bodies temples of the Holy Spirit, which they are.

He says that your body is not your own. So, am I the only one who maybe struggled a little bit to understand, verse 18. That's the part that said all other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually sins against their own body.

I had to read through some commentaries by Bible scholars, I trust, and one of those is John MacArthur. And he may be like the smartest, most detailed preacher to ever live, but he put it this way.

He said, he says, I believe, talking about Paul, he is saying, although sexual sin is not necessarily the worst sin, that didn't mean, what he's saying there is that like, it's not like an unforgivable sin, okay, that God can forgive that and change you.

[22 : 35] He says, while sexual sin is not necessarily the worst sin, it is the most unique in its character. It rises from within the body, bent on personal gratification. It drives like no other impulse, and when fulfilled, affects the body like no other sin.

It has a way of internally destroying a person like no other sin has. Because sexual intimacy is the deepest uniting of two persons, so we're going back to the perfect image of marriage between a man and a woman that God gives us, okay, he says, its misuse corrupts us on the deepest human level.

And yet, that too can be covered by the blood of Jesus Christ, and we are given the strength and the spirit to overcome these struggles. Because as those who belong to Jesus, these bodies are temples that will someday be perfect heavenly bodies.

These temples house the Holy Spirit, and these temples are called to be holy. And so, what do I do when I'm tempted? Well, first, I flee. I get out of there.

I delete the app, the social media, the whatever is taking me where I don't want to go. I stay away from that place. I don't go partying. I don't go near that house.

[23 : 50] I create boundaries. I create accountability so that I can stay pure in Christ. Or in the words of the famous philosopher Jenny, run, Forrest.

Run, right? Flee. Just get out of there. Don't try to stand up to it. You're not strong enough. Get yourself out of situations that your heart doesn't need to be in.

And second, I focus my heart on Jesus. I focus on Jesus. And I love how Hebrews 12 verses 1 and 2 puts this. Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

For the joy set before him, he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and he sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Listen, there's no high greater than walking with Jesus, keeping my eyes on the prize.

Because while sexual sin promises, it promises so much, it doesn't deliver. Only Jesus delivers the hope, the joy, the peace, the contentment, the purpose that you and I long to walk in.

[25 : 09] And when we make that decision that Jesus, I'm all yours, and I'm going to live my life in obedience to you and to your truth, you'll be amazed at the freedom that you will then walk in and you won't miss out on anything.

So yeah, just like John 10.10 teaches us, the thief, Satan comes only to steal, kill, and destroy. And all sin does that. But today, especially sexual sin can steal, kill, and destroy us in so many ways.

But what does Jesus say? that there's hope in the midst of it. He says, I have come so that you may have life and have it to the full. Pray with me.

Father, I just thank you for these words of life. I know today that we dealt with a topic that is very personal and very heavy. That there are people listening to my voice right now who may have these struggles.

I know that lust is a struggle for a lot of people. But Father, through your power and through your strength, we can overcome it through the Holy Spirit living inside of us, being our strength.

[26 : 21] Father, so thank you that you give us hope to overcome these things. Thank you that you give us these parameters of what healthy, godly relationships and sex look like when they are done inside your boundaries.

You are that ultimate father who cares about his children and who sets those boundaries so that we will stay in that communion, that intimacy with you.

And so I thank you, Father, that you love us enough to speak this truth into our hearts. Whether it's something we wanted to hear or not, your truth is awesome.

And you are God and we are not. We don't get to decide. You are the one who decides. So Father, we just pray that we will always have a heart that is surrendered to you and your truth and that lives it out as we seek holiness in you.

Thank you for these words of life. We pray in Jesus' precious name. God's people said, Amen and Amen. Hey, let me give you this invitation today. If you have some questions about your faith, maybe if you want to talk about giving your life to Jesus, we would love to come alongside you.

[27 : 33] Once again, my name is Ray Sweet. I'm the lead pastor at First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. But I'd love to come alongside you and just be there for you like others have done for me. And so please reach out to us.

We'll give you a couple ways to do that. You can call the church office, 812-663-8488. That's 812-663-8488. Once again, my name is Ray.

You can ask for me or Pastor Steve, Pastor Tyler, Pastor Mitch, any of us would love to help you or you can go also, you can go to email and you can email me at ray at FCC Greensburg dot com.

Hey, thank you so much for tuning in today. We pray that you are blessed by the power of God's word. Have a great week.