

Run Forest Run

The second half of verse 18 offers the reason for the command to 'Flee from sexual immorality'. We should run away from sexual immorality because sexual immorality is uniquely against the body. What does this mean? It's not as if getting drunk (v10) doesn't damage the body (it knocks off a few brain cells!) But it seems sexual sin is unique. It's to contradict our bodily union with Christ. It's to go against the bodily intimacy between two persons in marriage. And it is to disregard the Holy Spirit who lives inside the Christian (v19).

When it says to flee sexual immorality, it is a bit of a reminder of a figure in the bible who did just that. In Genesis 39, we're told of a guy named Joseph. A woman known as 'Potiphar's wife' was trying to seduce him. But when she said, "Lie with me", Joseph didn't muck around. He did what ever it took – he fled, even leaving the women clutching his clothes behind!

In your own situation, what will it mean to flee sexual immorality? What will it mean in terms of:

Stop doing certain things, or
Avoid watching certain things, or
Reading certain things, or
Putting certain practices and safeguards in place, or
Helping others to avoid sexual immorality.

Sex, our bodies and Jesus

In the area of sexual purity, notice that Paul's way of helping the Corinthian Christians is not by insisting on a whole heap of rules. What he does is take them back to the reality of who they are as Christians and what Christ has done for them. For ourselves, as we face sexual temptation and wonder how to relate to the opposite sex, this is the same truth we need to keep going back to again and again. Paul ends this section with a great reminder in verses 19-20 - that our bodies are not our own, because he has redeemed us we belong to Him. Maybe Pretty Ricky has it right after all – *My body* is actually *Your body*, that is Christ's. So let's aim to please Him with our body.

SEX 1 Corinthians 6:9-20

Currently in the Australian music charts is the song 'Your Body' by Pretty Ricky. Part of the song (the part least likely to make you blush) goes like this:

*And you can see in my eyes (yes sir)
That I'm lookin for a cutiepie (yes sir)
And we ain't gotta make love (yes sir)
And we can just cuddle up (yes sir)
But if she want me to beat it up (yes sir)
Then dammit, I'll beat it up (yes sir)
My body, your body (it's burnin' up)
My body, your body (it's burnin' up)
My body, your body (it's burnin' up)
My body, your body (it's burnin' up)*

As you can see, Pretty Ricky is not that pretty. Lyrics and images that present sex and overt sexuality are in music, advertising, television and movies. We even have in Brisbane this week, the trade show 'Sexpo' described as the Ekka but on Viagra. Some might think that today's society has lost all constraints and things are worse than they ever were before. But when we read some of Paul's first letter to the Christians in the city of Corinth, we discover it's plainly not the case. Pleasure seeking in sex was the Corinthian way, and so in that context the Corinthian Christians had to work out how to think and behave. Christians today have to work out how to deal with sexual issues and temptations, and we'll find a lot that's helpful in 1 Corinthians 6:9-20.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-20.

There are lots of reasons that Paul gives for not being sexually immoral. We'll have a look at some of them.

Before & After

In v9-11, what's the before and after picture that's given for Christian people?

In v11, there are three big theological words to describe the Christian person – *washed, sanctified, and justified*. What do they mean?

What motivation is Paul is giving to Christian people, to not be sexually immoral (or greedy for that matter) in this section?

This passage clearly gives a warning. Don't go back to what you were or how you see others living. As a follower of Jesus, you've been washed clean of all sin, you've been set apart to belong to God, you've been made righteous. Sure, as Christians we do continue to sin but as righteous people, it's not what characterizes our life any more. Our heart beats for love and self control and godliness, not sin. The warning is here. Don't go back to that former way of living. That former way of life is a total dead end.

Past sin causes hurt and regret. And no more so than sexual sin. But how are the words here about what God does in us, a comfort and an encouragement to Christian people?

Get your thinking Right

Paul now goes on to quote some well known Corinthian sayings about how you should live your life. When a certain place displays a certain culture and way life, it's all too easy for people in the church to unthinkingly adopt such a way of life as well.

The first saying is in verse 12 (twice). It's put in quotation marks by later translators to help us see the quote. What is the saying, and how does Paul counteract it?

All sort of sexual behaviour is legal eg. sex before marriage, but what reasons can you think of for why it is not helpful?

The second saying is in v13. As stated above, the quotation marks were added in by later translators. It's possible the saying goes longer to read - "Food for the stomach and stomach for the food but God will destroy them both." How does Paul counteract this way of thinking in v13-14?

It seems that in the Corinthian Greek culture, there was a fairly low view of the body – you had your spiritual side that was devoted to the divine, but with your body you could do with it anything that you wanted. It was basically a fleshy sack to fill up with food and stimulate with pleasure, and anyway, upon death the body was disposed with and you were then free to be united with the spiritual realm. But biblical Christianity sees no such dualism between spirit and body. It teaches a very high view of the body. It's not a sack, it's precious. God created our bodies and we should devote even our bodies to the one who created us and saved us. And it's not as if salvation means we will be free of our bodies. Jesus' body was raised to life. And we will continue with our bodies as well. Check out sometime 1 Corinthians 15:35-49. It talks of having our bodies transformed but not done away with.

Who are you united with?

In v15-17 Paul mentions the very common practice in Corinth of having sex with prostitutes. In these verses Paul uses a very tight argument to speak against it. Paul here speaks against this practice for Christian people on the basis of Christian people having become united to Christ. Our bodies don't simply belong to ourselves. Even our bodies are one with Jesus. For the Christian – to have our bodies united to Christ, should be mutually exclusive from having our body united to a prostitute in sex.