



SEXUAL SIN - WHAT IT IS, WHAT IT DOES & THE WAY OUT

PART I

It is impossible to understand the nature and consequences of sexual sin without first understanding what God's original plan and purpose was for mankind. Then from within an understanding of God's creative purposes we can begin to understand His plan and purpose for marriage and then sex within marriage.

MADE TO BE CREATIVE

Man is made in the image and likeness of God. God is spirit and, therefore, man is also a spiritual being. But God is also creative, being the Creator, and the spirit of man is, therefore, creative by nature.

But man is more than a spirit, he is also a creature of flesh. And flesh is more than just the body, for without there being a part of man which gives the body instructions, the body would be incapable of functioning effectively. The soul is that part of man which gives the body its instructions.

A body without a soul would be a bit like a car without a driver. Just as a car only moves when instructed to do so by its driver, the body only moves when acted upon by the soul. And just as a bad driver is capable of damaging the vehicle and causing it to be a danger to himself, other cars and other people, so the soul is capable of leading the body into dangerous territory, both endangering himself and being a danger to others.

Man's complete entity is, therefore, spirit, soul and body. It is through the spirit that man is able to fellowship with God. The soul stands at the interface between the spirit and the body. The soul and the body together are what the Bible refers to as the flesh and which enables man to function as a human being. The spirit and the soul together form what we broadly call the personality of a human being.

Creativity lies at the centre of the human spirit and God intended that it should find its expression in human beings through the flesh (the body and the soul). Whenever mankind uses the gifts that God has given for Godly purposes it is, indirectly, an act of worship of the God who made us.

So when a child makes a tower out of wooden bricks, or an architect designs a building, they are expressing their God-given creativity. When an artist paints a picture, an author writes a book or a chef prepares a meal, they are also expressing something of the creative gifting they received into their spirit from their Creator. Godly sex within the covenant of marriage rejoices the heart of God. So when a husband and wife express themselves in Godly sexual relationship it is both an expression of man's creativity and an act of worship to God!

THE CHALLENGE OF FREEWILL

When God made man, however, he risked everything by also giving him the gift of freewill. God was desirous of a relationship with man that is an expression of love, which means, among other things, that God desires a relationship that is entered into through the exercise of freewill choice, not one that is enforced through domination and control. But this also means that all the creative gifts God has given can be used by man for good or evil purposes.

An architect, for example, who is capable of designing a magnificent and inspiring cathedral could also use his creative gifting to design such awful things as the gas chambers of Auschwitz. An artist can use his brushes to paint a picture of exquisite beauty, but he can also use the same brushes to paint a scene of unimaginable filth, horror and degradation. A film director can inspire, challenge and entertain with a movie of extraordinary power and sensitivity or use the same skills to drag his viewers into mental participation in violence, pornography and distaste.

Sadly, there is no limit to the behaviour extremes of fallen man. Throughout history mankind has plumbed the depths of behaviour that is an abomination to a holy God. None more so is this the case than in the realm of sexuality, where ungodly desires of the soul can so easily take precedence over the desires of the spirit. Unredeemed man has no spiritual brakes to apply to his behaviour. Man becomes wise in his own eyes and "I'll do it my way" becomes the theme song of a world without God.

Only now, with the onset of a world-wide AIDS crisis of epidemic proportions is man having the opportunity to re-assess some of the physical consequences of removing the restraints on sexual behaviour. Tragically, the world's preferred response is not to discourage ungodly sexual activity through a return to Godly order, but to encourage further indulgence in Satan's counterfeit regime through an even wider availability of cheap or free, protective contraceptives, not solely for contraceptive purposes, but so as to limit the extent of disease transmission during heterosexual intercourse or homosexual relationships.

The world is only concerned about the physical dangers of unprotected sex. The god of this world has so blinded the eyes that the spiritual dangers of ungodly sex have become irrelevant to a Godless and politically correct society (where there are no absolutes and every faith or belief system, and moral code or lack of it, has to be given equal political standing, and Christian truth is made to take its place as a supposed "equal" alongside every other false religion, including witchcraft and atheism).

THE SPIRITUAL DANGERS OF UNGODLY SEX

The spiritual dangers of ungodly sex are such that no contraceptive in the world can ever provide protection against them. And many of those inside the church are seemingly ignorant of the spiritual consequences of sexual sin. I say 'seemingly ignorant', because if they were fully aware of the dangers, teaching in the church would at least match the teaching that is abundantly evident throughout scripture, and the incidence of sexual sin in the church would be significantly less than it actually is.

In reality there is so much sexual sin inside the Body of Christ that, on occasions it is hard to distinguish between the sexual practices of believers and unbelievers! Instead of the church being 'salt and light' in the world, the world has been allowed to sow poison inside the church. And so lightly is sexual sin often perceived, that for many the Bible's teaching on sex and sexuality is dismissed as out of date, or even irrelevant, for the permissive age in which we live. I have even had it said to me that they believed the Bible's teaching was true for earlier ages, but now man has developed reliable contraceptives, Biblical requirements for sexual conduct are no longer appropriate.

And even in those sectors of the church where there is clear and unequivocal teaching on what is right and wrong sexual conduct, there is little understanding of the spiritual consequences of sexual sin, leaving people ignorant of the reasons why purity truly is God's best for His creation. When teaching on the subject, I have found that when people understand what happens when we sin sexually, they come under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, see the need for cleansing and quickly come to the place of open confession and repentance.

It is not for nothing that Paul went out of his way to emphasise this point by telling the Christians in Corinth to "Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body". As we will see later sexual sin gives the enemy rights within the body through ungodly soul-ties.

We live in a rebellious age where respect for authority is no longer enough to restrain the behaviour of the wilful and, sadly, within the church respect for the authority of scripture has diminished and this is no longer enough to restrain the sexual behaviour of believers, let alone unbelievers. The church may have become more exciting and more charismatic, but in so doing it seems to have lost something of the fear of the Lord. And as is so clearly expressed in Exodus 20:20, it is "the fear of the Lord that will keep people from sinning." Nothing else will keep people from sinning when a person is alone and there is no expectation that anyone else will see what they are doing.

The Bible's teaching on sowing and reaping has been largely sidelined. Paul warned about not letting the grace of God become an excuse for sinful indulgence. The born again believer (one whose spirit has been restored again to fellowship with God through faith in Jesus Christ) living in a fallen world will never in this life be free from temptation. The age-old battle between the will of the spirit and the will of the soul (the flesh) is described graphically by Paul in Galatians 5.

Paul warned in verse 21 that “those who practice such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.” Understanding the difference between Godly and ungodly sex and then choosing to walk in God’s ways, could indeed be a matter of life and death. The writer of the Proverbs (2:18) warns that “the house of the adulteress leads down to death and her paths to the spirits of the dead”.

So what actually is adultery? Jeremiah 3 provides us with a powerful insight into God’s understanding of adultery. Here the peoples of Judah and Israel are accused of committing adultery with stone and wood (verses 8 to 10). Not because they were having ungodly sex, but because they were worshipping idols, worshipping a false god. They were joining themselves through worship to another god. Jehovah was their true God but they were going after another.

Adultery is, therefore, all wrongful joining together. By this definition all sexual sin, be it before marriage, after marriage, in homosexual relationships or even with animals is defined as being adulterous. Which means that the seventh commandment, “You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14) has a much wider meaning than just hetero-sexual sexual sin by married people. It embraces all forms of ungodly sexual relationships.

As this article unfolds the full spiritual dangers of sexual sin will become clear. My prayer is that as people begin to understand, they will find themselves on a road to restoration and healing.

HEALING GRACE AND MERCY

Although the Scriptures face the reality of the fact that even believers can fall into sexual sin and are clear on what is right and wrong, they are also full of hope, telling us of a God who longs to forgive and to heal. God’s promise is that when His people humble themselves, truly confess their sin, repent and turn from their sin, that he will forgive and restore. While what has been done cannot be undone, David’s account of his encounter with God, following the exposure of his adultery, with Bathsheba is eloquent testimony to God’s mercy and healing grace (Psalm 51).

It is absolutely clear, from both scripture and experience, that when we choose to walk in the ways of the god of this world we do open the door to the enemy, which means that those who have knowingly walked in sexual sin not only need to repent, ask for forgiveness and change their ways, but will also need deliverance in order to enter into the full healing that God wants them to have.

We cannot sweep these facts under the spiritual carpet. But we do need to be careful to respect the attitude of Jesus towards the woman who was caught in an act of adultery. Her accusers were ready to stone her to death, but Jesus had compassion upon her. It is easy to be judgmental without understanding.

The first time I ministered to a prostitute I was aware of an inner anger at what this twenty-three year old woman had done to men. When I asked how long she had been a prostitute, and she told me thirteen years, I began to reassess my thinking. When she told me how her father had left home, her mother had little money and how she was led into child

prostitution by a man who offered her sweets, and then money, for letting him touch her, I began to weep at the terrible damage that had been done by unscrupulous evil men. I finished up repenting to her on behalf of men for what they had done to her.

We must be very careful not to fall into Satan's trap of heaping condemnation on those who have sinned sexually. There is hope, there is forgiveness, there is deliverance and there is healing.

MADE FOR RELATIONSHIP

God designed man and woman for each other and provided them with the means through which they should not only express their relationship spiritually and emotionally, but also physically. God's intention for sexual expression between husband and wife was that this should be the high-point of human relationship, a deeply spiritual experience of extraordinary one-ness – indeed, so spiritual that the same Hebrew word is used to describe sexual relationships between human beings as to describe the intimacy and depth of spiritual relationship that man is able to have with the living God.

Sex was designed by God to be so enjoyable that the development of the human race through sexual reproduction would never be in doubt! Through the expression of their sexuality God allows men and women to share with him in an act of creation. And sex as God originally intended, between unfallen man and unfallen woman was, therefore, a glorious act of worship of the creator God.

While man's body has the physical capacity for casual, animal-like, sex with any female, without the requirement of commitment to a relationship, the idea of casual sex is totally foreign to God's plan for mankind. There is nowhere in scripture where any expression of casual sex, or sex outside of the marriage covenant, is approved of or encouraged. This is, however, the spirit of the age in which we are now living, where hedonism, unrestricted self-seeking pleasure, is rampant throughout much of the world's society.

Understanding that Godly sexual expression is a form of worship is a vital key to understanding why sexual sin leads people into sexual and demonic bondage. For God rejoices to bless His people with His spiritual presence, especially when they are worshipping Him. The early forms of the marriage service included a reference to adoration and worship, when in the vows with which the couple would commit themselves to each other they say these words, "with my body I, thee, worship"

Whenever we make freewill choices to please Him we put ourselves in the place of God's blessing being upon us. And there is no doubt that God rejoices to pour His blessing on Godly sexual relationships within the covenant of marriage.

The converse of this, however, is that in this fallen world Satan takes advantage of the fact that man was made to worship and that in worship man makes himself open to the spiritual. For Satan welcomes it when man indulges in sexual practices which are contrary to God's order, for it is not the living God that is then being worshipped, but Satan. God will not give His glory to another and in He will not, therefore, remain on the throne of a

relationship that is ungodly. He cannot bless or rejoice in those things that are contrary to His created order for mankind.

So, as the god of this world, Satan steps onto the throne of the relationship and receives the worship. But far from blessing the participants, who are pleasing Satan with their ungodly use of their creative sexuality, he uses the opportunity to bring them his cursing. And the spirits with which Satan indwells people are not holy, but unholy, or as the Gospel writers describe them, unclean. Through sexual sin they are able to access the body which scripture tells us is, or should be, the "temple of the Holy Spirit". (1 Cor. 6:19).

GUILT AND SHAME

Before the fall there was no sin and, therefore, no guilt or shame. Guilt and shame are what we feel when we have caused offence to someone else through our behaviour, especially when that someone else is God. In the absence of any other being, there cannot be any feeling of guilt or shame. The very fact that people are aware of guilt and shame is primary evidence of the existence of God.

Guilty is what we are as a consequence of an offence we have committed. Guilt is resolved through restitution and forgiveness. Jesus paid the price for our sin and through forgiveness we are absolved of the consequences of our sin.

Shame is what we feel on the inside when we have sinned. Shame makes us want to hide from those we have let down, hurt, betrayed or sinned against. A young boy will instinctively want to hide from his parents when he knows he has done something wrong, just as Adam and Eve tried to cover themselves up and hide from God in the garden.

Shame can only be healed when the sin that caused the shame has been brought to the light and forgiven. There are some people whose whole lives are lived behind a wall of shame. Sometimes the shame is as a result of what they have done, but often it is a consequence of what others have done to them also. A girl who has been sexually abused can feel the shame of what they have experienced, especially when an abuser lays the blame for what has happened on the victim, without being guilty in any way for what happened. Satan will always try and use shame to prevent people from stretching out their hands and asking for help.

Jesus is the only one who can touch and heal the person who is living with the consequences of shame in the heart. He paid the price for our sin, made it possible for us to be freed from the curse of other people's sin against us (through forgiving them) and know the reality of His healing presence, changing us from the inside out.