

March 21, 2021  
Christ the Rock Lutheran Church  
Farmington, New Mexico

<sup>9</sup> Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men <sup>10</sup> nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup> And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

<sup>12</sup> “I have the right to do anything,” you say – but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything” – but I will not be mastered by anything. <sup>13</sup> You say, “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both.” The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. <sup>14</sup> By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. <sup>15</sup> Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! <sup>16</sup> Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.” <sup>17</sup> But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

<sup>18</sup> Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. <sup>19</sup> 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; <sup>20</sup> you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies. (*1 Corinthians 6:9-20*)

## **CHRIST IS OUR STRENGTH WHEN TEMPTED TO INFIDELITY**

In the name of our Lord and Savior, brothers and sisters in Christ,

As language changes from generation to generation, certain words tend to take on a specific, more limited meaning. For example, no one today says, “We had a gay old time,” nor would the 1952 movie title, “The Lusty Men” be approved today. Such expressions would raise eyebrows and cause snickers for sure. *Gay* no longer means happy, joyful. And *lust* is exclusively connected to sexual desire, not as it was in that movie, a description of one who has a strong, robust outlook on life.

So also the term *infidelity*, the subject of this sermon, is used exclusively today in reference to unfaithful-ness in a marriage. But the Bible uses the word also in reference to one who is unfaithful to the Lord, because the relationship between the Lord and the believer is so much like a marriage. This is the point St. Paul makes in our text, that the temptation to infidelity isn’t limited only to marriage and the married; infidelity concerns our relationship with God, whether we are single or married.

### **I. God’s claim upon His temples**

***“Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit?”*** Paul asks (v.19), drawing a comparison to that beautiful, God-designed house of worship in Jerusalem. And a fine comparison that is, for the same Architect who gave David the plans for that building is the Architect and Creator of this living structure, our bodies. As His glory once filled that temple in Jerusalem, so God has chosen this temple of flesh and blood to be a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit. Therefore, God’s claim on our bodies is total and includes all of our body parts, including those that define our sexuality.

Today God’s right to define how His temple is to be used is being challenged: in our courts where marriage is no longer defined as the union of one man and one woman; challenged in gay pride parades down main-street America and challenged on prime-time television where sex without marriage is presented as the norm. These challenges are having an effect. Among America’s youth as young as ten there is an alarming openness toward sex. They have even coined phrases that reflect this attitude, for example, “friends with benefits” means friends who are willing to engage in sexual acts without any expectation of a commitment. A distinction is being made that somehow what one does with one’s body has no effect on one’s inner self.

Every Christian should recognize that God’s claim on our bodies goes far beyond their creation. The Christmas message proclaims that Jesus, the Son of God, became flesh, that is, He took on a nature like our own. So great was God’s love for humanity that He chose our kind of body for His Son. And it was in that body that our Lord Jesus suffered and died for us. And it was in His body, as our text says, that God raised Jesus from the dead. The point is that God hasn’t redeemed only our souls, our spiritual nature, He has redeemed all that we are. Is that not also what we confess in the Apostles’ Creed, that we believe in the “resurrection of the body”? God has given this body great value. It was on our bodies that the water of Holy Baptism was poured, and it is in the flesh glorified that we shall one day see God, as Job declared. God has put His claim on our bodies, as St. Paul writes, ***“You are not your own; you were bought at a price”*** (v. 20). That price was the body and blood, the very life of the Son of God, who gave His life in order that we might be redeemed, that we might be God’s own. God’s desire is to restore in us that image of Himself which was lost through the fall into sin. For this reason He sends the Holy Spirit to indwell every believer and mark and claim him or her as God’s holy temple.

## **II. God answers persuasive arguments**

This belief – that all I am belongs to God – stands in opposition to the thinking of our day as much as it did in ancient Corinth.

Corinth was a very open society in which sexual immorality abounded. In our text Paul quotes a popular expression in Corinth at that time: ***“I have the right to do anything”*** (v.12). The updated version might be, “My body is mine to do with as I please.” Different words, same intent. And then, as now, it is an argument often applied to sexual freedom. Paul counters this in two ways. First, he says, ***“but not everything is beneficial”*** (v.12). Because one is able, it doesn’t

automatically make it good nor right. To engage in acts of sexual immorality eventually results in both earthly and eternal harm, not blessing. Our text says, **“Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God?”** (v.9). God has made His judgment on such behavior quite clear even in this life.

Case in point: When communism came to power in Russia in 1917, all religious concepts were abolished, including what Christianity taught regarding sex, marriage and family life. Abortion was legalized, and adultery, bigamy and incest were no longer criminal offenses. Lust went unchecked in the new worker’s paradise. But their grand experiment turned into a nightmare. Family relationships deteriorated. Hordes of parentless children became wards of the state, and sexual disease was rampant. The Soviets got the message and in the 1930’s reversed their headlong plunge into sexual freedom. One cannot help but wonder if America is going to wake up to the same truth or learn that lesson the hard way?

**“I have the right to do anything’ – but I will not be mastered by anything,”** Paul continues (v. 12). When Christians argue that “God will forgive me anyway,” they are in danger of being re-enslaved and mastered by the sin from which Christ freed them. Jesus said, **“Everyone who sins is a slave to sin ... but if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed”** (Jn.8:34,36) – not free to go on sinning, but free from that enslaving sin.

A father explained this so well to his college-age daughter who wrote home telling about the casual attitude toward sex expressed by many of her classmates. She felt pressured, not just by young men, but more so by girls in the dorm, to throw-away her moral standards and surrender her virginity. She wrote, “I haven’t bought into their arguments yet, but I must confess there are times when I wonder what I’m waiting for.”

Her father wrote back, “I think I can tell you in six words what you are waiting for. You are waiting to be free – free from the nagging voice of conscience and the grey shadow of guilt. Free to give all of yourself, not a panicky fraction.” That father understood that what Satan disguises as a pleasure you’re entitled to, what friends promote as freedom, can result in a lifetime of regret.

The Corinthians were pretty modern in that they equated the appetite for food with the appetite for sex, an argument that we are hearing today. But those who have been burned by the sexual appetite understand what King Solomon wrote in his Book of Proverbs long ago: **“Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned? ... A man who commits adultery has no sense; whoever does so destroys himself”** (Prov.6:27,32). That destruction may take the form of a broken marriage, loss of family or position or reputation or income or health, or all of these. To be unfaithful in sexual matters, whether presently married or single, does hurt someone, it hurts you, Paul declares. **“Whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body”** (v.18b).

But above all, and most important for our discussion today, sexual infidelity is sin against Christ.

**“Do you not know,”** Paul asks – which implies that, of course, you know this – **“that your bodies are members of Christ Himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute?”** (v.15). All forms of immoral behavior do damage to our relationship with Christ. Immoral behavior is unfaithfulness toward Christ, whether we are married or single, because it denies His redemption, the power of His forgiveness, and drives away the indwelling Holy Spirit. We see the point the Apostle is making even more clearly if we reverse the question and ask, “What would Jesus do?” Can you imagine Jesus picking up a street-walker for a night of sexual indulgence? Can we imagine Him using sexual innuendos in His conversation? Can we imagine Jesus taking sexual favors from another without the commitment of marriage or sexually harassing someone at work? “Never!” we reply with Paul. And if not Jesus Christ, how can those things be true of those who belong to Christ?

This is the point parents must get across to their children: it isn’t merely about a style of dress that is provocative; it isn’t about the fear of an unplanned pregnancy, or the possibility of contracting HIV. If we think so, then we haven’t understood this scripture. What is at risk is our relationship with the Lord. What is at risk is eternal life, for the Word plainly says that those who do such things will not inherit eternal life (v.10). As Christians we all must become more discerning, more aware of the dangers posed by what we watch, or the thinking of worldly-minded people around us, more aware of the lure of infidelity.

Remember the father who replied to his daughter in six words? Well, there are six words in this scripture before us today that we need to keep in mind: **“You were bought at a price”** (v.20). These are the words we need to hold before ourselves, before our children and before our friends, for they tell us of that tremendous, infinitely great price our Savior paid that we might be His redeemed. Only where there is that understanding will there be a desire to do the **“therefore”** which follows: **“Therefore, honor God with your body”** (v.20).

So, this is how it works: to gain the victory over infidelity, over the temptations that come at us from every side today, we go to the cross of our Savior; we take our children to the cross, just as Paul has taken us there in our text. When we do so, we give the Holy Spirit that opportunity to take us deep into the heart of God’s love. There, before our Savior, we may confess, “Lord, I have sinned. I have been unfaithful to you, to my marriage partner, to the body you gave me.” We tell Him of the guilt and shame without excuse, and He says to us, “All is forgiven. Now go and honor God with your body and I will be your strength and give you the victory.”

Christ is our strength – that is the truth we have heard again today. And Christ is our victor in overcoming temptation.

Amen.