

Hi! we're continuing our series in the book of 1 Corinthians and tonight we come to chapter 5 which is on page 1147.

Corinth is about fifty miles west of Athens, which puts it about here...

It was the provincial capital of Greece,

It was a port city (which meant that it was full of people away from home, with no responsibilities, with money to spare, looking for a good time); and

It was the centre of worship for the Greek goddess of sex, Aphrodite.

By most people's standards Corinth was pretty depraved.

There were 1,000 male and female temple prostitutes and sex slaves,

there was massive gender confusion and

rampant promiscuity.

The Greek geographer Strabo, writes around 20 AD:

That since wives are only suitable for raising families; sexual pleasure comes from visiting prostitutes and young boys.

In Corinth

They had sex outside of marriage,

They had prostitution, strip clubs and open marriages,

They offered sex with children.

To be honest, Corinth is about 1,500 miles away from Brighton but its *right next to it* in terms of values.

Within a 10 mile radius of this church,

We have Sex outside of marriage,

We have prostitution, strip clubs and open marriages,

We have sex workers who will have been **forced** into doing what they are doing.

Of the 700,000 people that are trafficked each year in the West,

80% are woman and girls; 50% are children.

Most end up working in brothels, sex clubs, massage parlours and saunas and some of these within 10 miles of us.

There is not much difference between us and Corinth.

The average boy in Lewes first watches others have sex on a screen aged 10;

According to UK Psychology Magazine 81% of 14-16 year olds look at pornography online at home each week.

Our culture is right there alongside Corinthian culture.

And that culture had seeped into the Church.

They say when a ship is in the sea that is fine; it's when the sea is in the ship that you need to worry!

In 1 Corinthians, not only was the sea in the ship, but the ship was awash, and Paul is hitting the panic button!

In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul makes it clear that as a church

we **must** march to a different drumbeat to the world

we **must** have a completely different scale of sensitivity to sin in our life; and

we **must** judge ourselves by a different standard to the way we judge others

Tonight I want us to look at:

a Different Drumbeat;

a Different Sensitivity; and

a Different Standard

to the world

And what I am about to say may be uncomfortable for us to hear –
and we may struggle with it
but Jesus said
'if salt loses its saltiness it is fit only to be thrown out and trampled by men'

1. We must march to a Different Drumbeat.

In v1 Paul writes:

[“It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you”](#)

The word is “porneia” - it means sexual sin.

So what is sexual sin?

Well, according to the Bible, a man and a woman get married (now there's a radical idea!)

And they become one.

That's it.

Anything outside of that is unbiblical.

One man, one woman, one flesh, one lifetime.

Anything outside of that:

sex before marriage,

sex outside of the marriage,

bringing other people into the marriage,

watching other people have sex on TV or the Internet whether they are married or not

whatever it is, it is unacceptable;

It is unacceptable.

And in the first 5 verses Paul shows us 3 lies that the church has swallowed.

1.1 He says, you and I are NOT free to do what we want to do

There is a myth that says consenting adults are free to do whatever they want to do – but that's not right

[v1 says “It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife”.](#)

“A man has his father's wife.”

I don't know whether he is having sex with his mum or his step-mum or if his dad has died and they have run off together...

I don't know and I don't want to know.

What Paul is saying is that these here are **two consenting adults** who claim to be Christians
and they do not have the freedom to do whatever they want!

The Corinthian Church was saying “they're consenting adults; they are free to do what they want!”
Paul is saying “No, you don't have the freedom to do that”.

Sexual freedom that takes sex outside of the context of:

one man, one woman, one flesh, one lifetime,

will end up with

soaring teenage pregnancies (which is what we have in our society)

abortion on demand (which is what we have)

widespread Sexually Transmitted Diseases

unwanted and therefore unloved children

single parent families who are struggling because they are by themselves

broken and unhappy marriages

gender confusion

and young women who have been manipulated, fooled, conned for sex
all of which we have...

We do not have the freedom to live how we want,
How we live affects others and sets the tone for our society

the first myth is that we are free to do what we want –
but we march to a different drumbeat

1.2 The second myth is that: Tolerance is good.

[A man has his Father's wife](#)

And you are... proud, you're proud!

You have parades that celebrate your pride!

You're proud of your tolerance, your diversity, your open-mindedness that consenting adults can do as they please.

[v2 Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief?](#)

- shouldn't you rather have been heartbroken that someone would do such a thing?

- shouldn't you have despaired that those who say they love God can do this?

- shouldn't you have been filled with grief?

Many people want churches to be open and affirming.

What we need, is for churches to be is open and discouraging!

We need to be open, we need to say

that everyone can come,

that everyone is called to belong,

that everyone is loved irrespective of who they are and what they have done or the mistakes they have made,

but not everyone's life style can be affirmed.

Tolerance isn't always good!

We are not tolerant of a bridge that falls down when people walk over it

We are not tolerant of an airline whose planes fall out of the sky when people fly in them

We are not tolerant of an Oil Company who spills 2.5 million gallons of oil a day into the sea

And in the same way

We cannot be tolerant of a society that says to our teenagers that if you fancy someone you should expect to have sex with them, that 'putting out' is a valid way of making you feel wanted, that sex is just another leisure option;

We cannot be tolerant of a society that says your identity is found in your sexual orientation (because our identity is far more profound than that);

We cannot be tolerant of a society that says personal happiness is more important than community good.

The call is not to affirmation. The call is to holiness.

and when we tolerate that which God does not tolerate,

what we are saying is that God is wrong and we know better.

we do not have to be tolerant of everything –

we are not free to do what we want;

we march to a different drumbeat. And

1.3 the third myth is that we are not to Judge others!

Yet Paul says

v2 Shouldn't you have put out of your fellowship the man who did this?

Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit.

And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this...

Some people will say, "Didn't Jesus say, 'You should not judge?'"

And that's true, but Jesus is talking in Matthew 7 about hypocrisy

He's saying, "If you have a 2 × 4 in your eye, and your friends got a speck of sawdust in his,

you don't you walk up to them and say, 'oh dear, you've got some sawdust in your eye. You'd better deal with that before it scratches you.'

Because they will turn around and say, 'well you've got a plank of wood sticking out of your head – don't you think you need to do something about that first?!'

There is this nonsensical idea that unless we know someone, and sit down with them, and understand their motives we can't really judge their actions.

Paul says, "I'm not even with you but I have passed judgment on you."

It's very simple

"Are you having sex outside of marriage?" "Yes." "Then it's a sin."

You are disobeying God and modelling something that falls short of God's best for society.

They say "Well, you haven't even met me.", you say "well I don't need to - it's a sin."

They say "Well, you don't even know my story.", you say "well I know the part of the story that matters – you're having sex outside of marriage - it's a sin."

They say "Well, I don't feel like we're in community together.", you say "how can we be, when you are deliberately sinning!"

if a **Christian**, is living a habitual life of unrepentant sin, then for their good and for the good of everyone who watches them, we need to do something.

It isn't loving to sit idly by.

Friends who love their friends don't allow them to take heroine, they say it's wrong, you have to stop, you will destroy yourself and those who love you!

Paul says,

v4 When you are assembled in the name of our Lord and ... and the power of Jesus is present, hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.

This is very stark!

Paul is fighting for these people's salvation.

He says "Hand them over to Satan",

let them see the unrestrained consequences of their actions,

not so that they may be punished, but so that they may be saved!.

Look, no one gets away with sin,

We reap what we sow,

It is better that the consequences hit us now, than last forever!

There is nothing trivial, nothing light, nothing inconsequential about sin.

It kills people spirits, it destroys people's relationship with God, it fractures communities,

Paul is saying

It is better that they feel the consequences of their actions now than lose their salvation forever.

You say, “that sounds cruel.”
Actually it’s the most loving thing you can do.

If people repent then there is love and support and grace and mercy.
You want to stop looking at pornography?
Or at least “you want to want to”? Good.
You want to stop treating yourself cheaply by giving yourself away?
Or you want to find a way out having over-committed yourself? That’s good.
You want to stop pretending that you are man and wife and actually become man and wife?
You don’t know how – but you want to - That’s great !
You keep messing up – but you don’t want to – We understand!

We’re going to walk with you.
We’re going to acknowledge that we’re **all** sinners—
We’re not going to say ‘we are better than you’
We’re not going to judge you.
We want to help you in this...
Be encouraged we are here for you!
Talk to us, we won’t judge you, condemn you, or betray you.
We will help.

But, you refuse to stop sleeping with your boyfriend?
you refuse to get out of that affair?
you refuse to want to be a role-model?
AND YOU ARE A MEMBER OF THIS CHURCH
and you don’t care...

then you are saying to Jesus
I don’t care that you died to save me from this sin – what is that to me?
I don’t care that I am hurting others by my actions
I don’t care that I am being a poor role model.
I don’t care that I am salt that has lost its saltiness.
Then the best that can happen to you is that you feel the full consequences of your actions
not so that you will be punished but so that you will repent.

we are not free to do what we want
we cannot be tolerant of everything
we cannot sin and get away with it

We have a different drumbeat

2. Secondly, We also have a different sensitivity

*v6 Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?
Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast...*

For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.

OK, so unless you know your Ancient Hebrew history you’ll have no idea what this is saying!

Every year Jewish people celebrate Passover.
The Passover is that day 3,500 years ago when, God’s judgment passed over the Israelites, and fell on their Egyptian Slave Masters instead.

The Israelites first born child was saved from death by the sacrifice of a lamb, the sprinkling of its blood on the door-post and the eating of a meal together.

Part of this meal (called the Seder meal) was to look for yeast in the house and throw it out.

Yeast is a fungus that eats sugar and excretes alcohol and carbon dioxide

We use it to make bread and beer by fermentation or putrefaction.

Yeast putrefies food.

And therefore, in the Old Testament, it is synonymous for sin, decomposition, rot

What Paul is saying here is that

just as a little yeast can work through the whole batch of dough,

so a little sin can lead to complete corruption:

A little flirtation can lead to an affair

An appetite for alcohol can lead to an addiction

A lie can break a friendship.

What starts off seemingly insignificant can lead to ruin.

Pornography awakens within us desires, knowledge, and expectations that are impossible to control.

Sex outside of marriage has led to more hurt and pain and regret than anything I know of.

Little by little, society's values infect us

and if we just accept them then before long

we will believe what society believes

we will be indistinguishable from our culture

we will be useless for the kingdom ending up with the same self-inflicted wounds, baggage and hurt.

So Paul says

“look just like your Jewish ancestors would rid all traces of yeast in the household,

so you need to be vigilant and rid yourselves of all traces of sin in your life”

You need to aim for purity, you need to aim for holiness, you need to model obedience.

What this means is that

whenever we are looking at something we shouldn't be looking at (on the TV, in magazines, on the internet) –

we should turn it off, turn it over, throw it away.

Whenever we are tempted to do something we know is wrong, we are not to flirt with it, we are not to try to control it, or dabble with it, we are to be ruthless and get rid of it from our lives altogether.

Look we can't stop sin entering eyes, our thoughts, our minds, we can stop it taking root.

Someone once said you can't stop birds flying overhead, you can stop them making a nest in your hair.

So be pure, be holy.

We march to a different drum-beat

We have a completely different sensitivity to sin

And finally

3. We Judge ourselves by a different Standard.

*v9 I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—
not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral...*

In that case you would have to leave this world.

But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler.

With such a man do not even eat.

What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church?

Are you not to judge those inside?

God will judge those outside.

Expel the wicked man from among you.

For many churches the temptation is to lift up the draw-bridge and disassociate itself from the world. The reality is, that God does not call us to judge people outside of the Church he calls us to love them, We don't know their heart.
We don't know their life.
We don't know their background,
We don't know if they are looking for God,
We don't know if God is going to save them.
We don't know what's going on - God does.

We are not to condemn them but love them
We are not to judge them but to serve them.
We are to be like Jesus with them
like when he encountered that thug and extortionist Zacchaeus
to come alongside them,
to listen to them
to live lives that are
holy (but not sanctimonious),
good (but not prudish),
loving (but not door-mats).
And by this to point them to God
We are not judge those outside of the Church.

But for those who say
God is God of my life
I accept the authority of his word
I want to live to please Jesus
by that very confession we have a duty to say with tenderness
Come on, walk the talk, live the life,
Live such good lives among the people that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven
Come on repent...
And if they agree
then restore them, applaud them, encourage them!
don't patronise them, don't hold a grudge against them, don't keep a secret file on them
be gentle with them, know that there by the grace of God go you and I
run to meet them, be quick to put a ring on their finger, a robe on their back and rejoice with them.
For this is Faith in action!
We are all sinners, we are all broken... c'mon leave your habit of sin and live for God!

But if they won't, if they say
I will sin and I don't care if Jesus was crucified for this
I will do what I want and I'm not listening to what God wants
I will put my needs before Jesus' needs, before the kingdom's needs, before the reputation of the church's needs.
Then weep for them.

Because in what way are they different to the world?
In what way is God actually God in their life?
In what way are they even a Christian?

You know there comes a point in every Christian's life
when they realise what it means to accept Jesus as Lord and follow him
At that point they must make a choice...

It could be about their sex life
It could be about whether they will tithe or not
It could be about whether they lie or not
It could be about whether they will forgive someone who hurt them or not
It could be about whether they will give their life to Jesus or not

This is the point where we discover for ourselves whether we really love Jesus
whether we have really ever understood what the cross is all about

It is at these cross-roads where we meet Jesus crucified for us
and know whether we are living to please God or to please ourselves.

And if we choose 'not' then
if we are a Christian, this is where we CONSIGN ourselves to live outside the fellowship of the Church forever;
and
If we are not Christian, where we CONSIGN OURSELVES to live outside of God forever.
And upon this decision we are judged.

Know this:

You and I are called to march to a different drum beat – if there is an habitual sin in our life – we must stop.
We are called to have a different sensitivity – if there is something that trips you up – then throw it out and do
all you can to avoid it
We are called to a different judgement
– do not consign yourself to live outside of the fellowship of the church;
- do not consign yourself to live outside of a relationship with God forever in hell.
Choose this day who you will serve?
Live such good lives among the people that they may see what you do and give glory to God.