

FORNICATION

1 Corinthians 6:18 -- Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.



Introduction

1. More and more, people are having relations with one another, without the benefit of the marriage license, to the extent that they think nothing of what they are doing. Why not? Everyone else is doing it! It seems to be socially acceptable. We are mutually consenting adults and the old morality no longer fits the new common sense of things.
2. Perhaps the pulpit has concentrated too much on the problem of adultery and not enough on fornication. After all, adultery is a permanent state of sin and fornication can be only a one-time act. Wrong! Fornication can be a state of sin also, but even the one time act can have far ranging and extensive ramifications.
3. Because everyone is doing it does not automatically make it right. Usually to the contrary. It is still not accepted in God's society. Horrifyingly, it is not consenting adults, but children who are doing it, and it is not common sense, but more a common amoral nonsense.

A. The Old World in the New - Defining the Problem

Galatians 5:19 -- Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality...

1. To let the young know that what they think is a new freedom is nothing more than very old perversions, definitions can be drawn from the Classical Greek, a language from before the time of Christ and from civilizations ungodly.
2. "Fornication" is the English translation of the Greek word *porneuo* which is derived from the word *pernemi* (to sell). It was used of the woman who prostituted herself and of the man who went to whoring or to fornicate.
3. The word-group can describe various extra-marital sexual modes of behavior as it deviates from the accepted social and religious norms (e.g. homosexuality, promiscuity, pedophilia, and especially prostitution).
4. But it also included something just as devastating. It included cultic prostitution as part of the ancient fertility rites. It was believed that the performance of sexual intimacy in the sanctuary would ensure the fertility of every thing living in the land and prevent the loss of the procreative and generative faculties.
5. This had wide-spread acceptance in the ancient world. Herodotus recounts how Babylonian women had to sacrifice themselves at least once to the goddess Mylitta by giving their body to a stranger in the temple precincts. Strabo, the historian, relates that cultic prostitution gained acceptance in the great sanctuaries of Corinth, Eryx and Athens, "Over a thousand courtesans consecrated to Venus lived in Corinth alone."
6. It was still a dual world though. Even as Demosthenes judged that "The *hetaere* [prostitutes] we have for our pleasure, the concubines for the daily care of our bodies, and our wives so that we can have legitimate children and a true guardian of the house." It was the Stoics who strove for a new sexual ethic. They did not reject sexual pleasure, but they unanimously condemned all adultery and extra-marital sexual intercourse.
7. According to one English anthropologist, sexual promiscuity has lead to the breakdown of the family system and has destroyed at least 80 civilizations.

B. Becoming One Flesh

1 Corinthians 6:16 -- *Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a harlot is one body with her? For He says, "The two will become one flesh."*

1. This relates to point 4. above. Cultic prostitution became the major confrontation the people of God had with the Baal worship in the Old Testament. "Baal's relationship to the earth was that of a *hieros gamos* [a sacred marriage]; he is the mythical generative power that fructifies the earth by means of the sperm of rain. Human beings share in his fertilizing power by entering this mystery and imitating it" (G. von Rad). This took place through intimacy with a prostitute in the sanctuary. This was both physically sensual and "spiritual."
2. The bitter struggle that God had with Israel concerns not only her sensual conduct, but also, that it was given in the form of worship to the Baals as though they owed the blessings of the land to the Baal-cult. Israel was giving herself over to a mythic divination of husbandry, thus her harlotry was merely a manifestation of her idolatry and lack of personal faithfulness to Yahweh.

Hosea 2:8,13 -- *For she does not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the new wine, and the oil, and lavished on her silver and gold, which they used for Baal... And I will punish her for the days of the Baals when she used to offer sacrifices to them and adorn herself with her earrings and jewelry, and follow her lovers, so that she forgot Me," declares the Lord.* (See also Jeremiah 3:1-9; 5:7ff; Ezekiel chapters 16 & 23).

3. Along with this concept of sensual idolatry came the Gnostic idea that one could separate the body from the spirit and thus entertain all sorts of sins of the flesh and claim there was no harm done to the spirit. Paul's argument is that the two are inseparable. When God said that in marriage "two become one flesh" He was not referencing the joining of the bodies alone. In many passages of the New Testament the word "flesh" has come to mean the "sinful nature" or "the mind of the flesh." That is, the mind begins to develop an appetite for the world in disregard to the call of the Lord. When one becomes "one flesh" with a harlot they have clearly demonstrated their mind is now bent toward things evil and is separating itself from the community and love of God. This is also the conclusion to the "Da Vinci Code." [Consider also the immune system]

1 Corinthians 6:13-16 -- *Food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food; but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord; and the Lord is for the body. Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot?...*

Romans 8:5,7 -- *For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are of the Spirit, the things of the Spirit... because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God...*

4. Thus the seriousness of fornication is that it is the commitment of the body and the mind to all that is opposed to God. It is the worship of the world and devotion to things thought to be superior to the way of the Lord. Those who engage in fornication are called by Paul "pseudo brothers" (not real Christians) and are to be turned out of the church in the hope of changing their thinking.

1 Corinthians 5:9,11 -- *I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people... But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person...* (See also Ephesians 5:3 & 1 Thessalonians 4:3)

1 Corinthians 5:5 -- *I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord...*

1 Corinthians 6:9 -- *Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, or idolaters...*