

## Unshakeable, Colossians 3:5 “Grace, Truth and Sexuality” Part 1, 3/12/17

We come to our study in Colossians to Paul’s instructions on how to live in life of freedom and power in light of the gospel, in light our union with Christ as we looked at 2 weeks ago in 3:1-4, now we get to verse 5.

***Colossians 3:5 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.***

We live in a culture that has largely redefined what is morally acceptable and encouraged and unacceptable and discouraged. And so when we come across a text like this in Scripture we can’t assume we all know what Paul means by the term sexual immorality. According to whose standard? And so we need to slow down and take two weeks to unpack this. We are going to wrestle with some real, relevant, uncomfortable and controversial questions about sexuality. But as I’ve said before- if it is in Scripture we aren’t going to avoid it because it’s difficult, because we believe the Bible is true, is the timeless Word of God, even when it doesn’t fit into our modern day sensibilities or view of the world. Some of the questions we will address both in these messages and in some articles we will make available are: What is God’s design for sex? What is sexual immorality? Is sexual desire a sin or just the behavior? What do I do with unfulfilled sexual longings and longings for intimacy? What does the Bible say about homosexuality? Are people born straight, gay or both? What should I do with my own sexual desires if they don’t align with Scripture? How should I respond to a friend or family member that identifies as gay, bisexual or lesbian? Now we aren’t going to address every question or possible scenario, but my hope from these two weeks is threefold: 1) Equip you with a more biblical view of sexuality 2) Understand the deeper problem of our sin 3) Awaken a more loving, gracious and truthful approach to the LGBT community and your loved ones who struggle with or identifies as something other than heterosexual.

Where I want to go with today’s message is to reclaim the biblical teaching on sexuality in light of those, even within some Christian circles, that are attempting to erode our confidence that the Bible is clear about these issues.

### **1) Define sexual immorality.**

Here in v.5 Paul tells us to “put it to death in us sexual immorality.” Don’t nurture it. Don’t cuddle up with it. Don’t see how close you can get to it... kill it! Strong language, we agree? So we better have a clear understanding of what it is.

***“Porneia” here in Colossians 3 encapsulates any and all sexual activity outside of the God-ordained marriage relationship between one husband and one wife.*** Any sexual activity with boyfriend, girlfriend, random hook-up, extra-marital affair, polygamy, sexual fantasy, pornography...etc.

But you say, well hold on, Nate. How do you know that word means all that? There are some scholars that have argued that this term is only used in it’s technical sense

meaning harlotry or prostitution. And so they would argue that the Bible isn't against all sex outside of marriage, but rather specifically prostitution. And this for some has been used to justify consensual sex outside of marriage. But this has been widely refuted by thoughtful scholarship, both by Christian and secular linguists and historians.

### **Arguments for "Porneia" as all-inclusive**

1) **Various Uses in Scripture:** It can technically mean prostitution, but before, during and after Paul's day it was used to describe all kinds of sexual deviation, both specific and general. This word is used 26 times in the New Testament for variety of specific and general applications. We have found this term in other ancient documents contemporary with the New Testament that have used this term to describe general sexually deviant behavior.

2) **Context:** Paul uses this term in verse 5 in a list of other general terms- Impurity, evil desire, covetousness... so we can make a pretty good determination, both here and in other times it is used by Paul.

3) **Sexual Sin goes Deeper:** Even if this term was used specifically here Jesus says that it's not just the physical act of sex outside of marriage that is sinful, but even sin in the heart.

**Matt. 5:27-29**

*You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery." But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

4) **God's design for sex** was always intended exclusively for marriage. The Bible has taught and the community of faith has held sacred the sanctity of marriage.

**Genesis 2:24**

*Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast (cleave) to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.*

And this is repeated not just in the OT, but confirmed by Jesus in Matthew 19 and Paul in Ephesians 5.

**Hebrews 13:4**

*Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.*

God invented sex between 1 man and 1 woman as a very practical, visible, beautiful way to say to your spouse, with whom you have made a covenant (for better or for worse, till death do us part)- "I belong completely and exclusively to you." The two shall become one flesh- sex consummates the commitment you have made to another person to be spiritual one, relationally and emotionally one. How opposite of most of what culture tells us about sex!

**Pop-Culture view: Give your body but not your heart (Commitment Free)**

Biblical view: Sex consummates a whole-hearted, exclusive union (Full-commitment)

Pop-Culture view: Sex is a right to use for my own pleasure, so I can use it however I desire (self-centered).

Biblical view: Sex is a responsibility and gift for the pleasure of my spouse (self-giving)

Pop-Culture view: Sex is a just a chemical/biological release and doesn't mean anything (devalued)

Biblical view: Sex is a sacred, beautiful gift given to us by our creator (Highly valued)

So with this understanding in view, let me be very clear. This isn't Nate's opinion- this is God's Word. Any sexual activity outside of a husband and wife relationship is sin. It is rebellion your creator. What Paul is calling us to is to put it to death, fueled by the Spirit, motivated by obedience and worship of God. Put to death porn habit. Put to death the emotional or physical affair you are having. Put to death sex with your boyfriend or girlfriend... don't round 1<sup>st</sup> base and head to second... Put to death the fantasizing...

You say, ok but Nate here's my problem with that. God is the one who gave me these desires. And he made me like this. And he doesn't make mistakes. So if he made me with these desires and longings than it must be OK. After all why would he make me with these desires only to not let me have them? I vividly remember justifying sexual immorality as a 15 year old kid with this argument. I said to myself...well in Bible times they were married at 15 and since we can't get married yet, then I'm sure God understands. And this has been used for justification for porn, sex, affairs, homosexual activity and just about everything else...

### **Lady Gaga mega hit Born this Way**

No matter gay, straight, or bi  
 Lesbian, transgendered life  
 I'm on the right track baby  
 I'm beautiful in my way  
 'Cause God makes no mistakes  
 I'm on the right track, baby  
 I was born this way  
 Don't hide yourself in regret  
 Just love yourself and you're set  
 I'm on the right track, baby  
 I was born this way

This is an anthem that fits our modern day sensibilities. And on the surface that argument seems reasonable... if I have these desires then they must be from God. Even from a Christian standpoint- because God doesn't make mistakes and I was born this way so it must be OK. But is that built on a biblical foundation. Living with

a clear biblical worldview today requires more precise language. More thoughtful, biblical grounding. Are all our desires “good and natural” if we were born with them?

Depravity: The deeper problem and result of sin.

**Gen. 1&2- God created everything good. God created everything to be in rhythm and harmony.** God with man, man with man, man with nature, man with himself. Shalom. Everything God created was not meant to terminate on itself but to roll up into worship of God.

**Gen. 3 Mankind commits treason against God.** Instead of allowing God to define parameters of morality. Instead of finding joy in what God has provided them, they are tempted to seek pleasure apart from God, in what he has created instead of the creator.

Everything fractures at that moment. **The rhythm and harmony fractures.** God’s relationship with mankind, our relationship with one another, our relationship with nature, our relationship with our own bodies and desires... the curses are God saying what the deep ramifications of treason will be. This deep fracturing of the rhythm and harmony of God’s creation is not just the explanation of earthquakes and floods and weeds in your backyard and for wars...but it explains what is wrong with us.

Now we are born with desires not in harmony with God. **Disordered desires** and more specifically disordered sexual desires. All of us are skewed sexually. None of us are straight. And this levels the rhetoric. This evens the playing field. See we can’t say those homosexual sinners out there and us heterosexual saints in here... no, the doctrine of depravity and the ramifications of sin don’t allow that. There is disordered heterosexuality. All of us are bent to desiring things that we ought not to desire.

And so the argument, I’m on the right track baby I was born this way is not a biblical message. And this goes beyond sexual desires.. People are born with aggressive tendencies may lead to violent desires, Born with lethargic tendencies may lead to desire to be lazy or lead to obesity, Frenetic tendencies may lead to desire to be a workaholic, Addictive tendencies may lead to alcoholism or bondage to gambling or deadly smoking...In other words, in a world where the effect of sin permeates to the roots of nature and disorders all of life, we cannot define as good and natural whatever has physical roots. So you were born that way? Welcome to the club called the human race. We were all born with the seeds of disordered desires it is just a matter of what was watered and has sprouted up.

God intended sexual desire to be a gift to be given and received in the context of marriage. Because of the fall, sexual desire has been corrupted and disorder in many ways.

**Application:**

- 1) Don't devalue sex. Highly esteem God's beautiful design for it in the context of marriage.
- 2) God calls us to kill not cultivate our disordered sexual behavior.
- 3) God calls us to a deeper ownership of the problem of our sin.
- 4) God call us to a deeper appreciation of the work of Jesus Christ.

Gospel:

You don't go to hell for being sexually disordered...you don't go to hell for being gay. And heterosexuality doesn't get you to heaven. What sends you to hell is a rejection of your need for Jesus Christ for salvation and a relationship with Christ. What sends you to heaven is that fact that you can't save yourself, you need to be properly related to Christ. Failed worship is our worst disorder. This is beneath all the maladies of the world. Repairing this, through a relationship with Christ, not first our disordered sexuality, is our main business in life.

**-Embrace the Gospel.**

- Gospel teaches us that we are forgiven in Christ. God has not run out of grace.
- Gospel teaches us that we are no longer slaves to sin. Romans 6
- Gospel teaches us to expect life-transformation..
- The Gospel teaches us to live a life of repentance.
- Gospel trains us to hate our sin and fight against it