

The escalating trend of sexual entrapment and the need for purity

Some statistics

In a recent article entitled *What Porn Does To Men*, London's Guardian newspaper made the statement that "we are living in a sex crazed society". While this is not unique to the times we are living in (it has been with us since the dawn of humanity), it is true that with technological advances such as the internet, cell phones and ipods we are facing an exponential upward curve in especially the preponderance of pornography.

Statistics given by the Internet Filter Review are very alarming:

- The USA produces a new so-called adult movie every 39 minutes – an increase of 945% over the last 20 years.
- Every second 28,258 people view a porn site on the internet.
- Every second R21,525 is being spent on pornography in an industry whose annual worldwide turnover exceeded R679 billion in 2006. This is larger than the combined revenue of Microsoft, Google, Amazon, eBay, Yahoo, Apple and Earthlink.
- It is no longer a totally male dominated practice. The breakdown of male/female visitors to pornography sites is 72% male and 28% female.
- The average age of first exposure to pornography on the internet is 11 years.

We must not fool ourselves by thinking that Christians are immune to it. In *Eros Redeemed* John White said "The world at present influences the church more than the church influences the world." The same statistics quoted above show that 47% of Christians interviewed, acknowledged that pornography was a problem in their homes. My experience has made me wonder if it is not substantially higher than that.

Some of the spiritual implications for Christians and the church at large

Sexual sin is idolatry

Paul ascribes a certain uniqueness to sexual sin. In 1 Corinthians 6 he says:

The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 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! 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." But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

When we understand Paul's take on worship, we will also understand why he says that which he does in the above verses. At the end of Romans 11 he comes to the conclusion that *from Him and through Him and to Him are all things*. He is the circle of life and of cosmic existence. He then moves into chapter 12 where he says *therefore, I urge you..in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship* (Greek: *logikos latreia* or logical service). What he

basically says is that if we can be convinced that God really is the origin, process and destination of our lives, our common sense, our reasoned (not emotional) response should be to present our bodies to Him in worship of Him. By this definition we can say that we tend to worship that which we perceive will give us life or meet our needs as we are currently experiencing them.

Giving our bodies in sexual sin is nothing less than worshipping the ancient demonic deities of Baal and Ashteroth. That to which we submit ourselves to obey become our master, either righteousness that leads to eternal life, or sin that leads to death – a man is a slave of whatever has mastered him.

It destroys true relationships

Sexual sin is rooted in self absorption. It can therefore not love reasonably, but only selfishly.

It destroys creativity

This also is founded on self absorption. In order to be creative in any way, one has to be able to look outside of yourself and to God. Creativity is also based on a healthy self assessment, something that is not an integral part of our make-up when we are caught in sexual sin.

Sexual sin disempowers us

There is an interesting miscellaneous law in Deuteronomy 25:11 – 12:

If two men are fighting and the wife of one of them comes to rescue her husband from his assailant, and she reaches out and seizes him by his private parts, you shall cut off her hand. Show her no pity.

It seems like quite a harsh sentence on a woman who is simply wanting to protect her husband. The truth of the matter is that if you grab a man by his genitals you “can reduce him to a shocked, groaning and vomiting weakling, or you can seduce him to give you what you want.” (John White in *Eros Redeemed*). That is where Satan, metaphorically speaking, has the church – having greatly reduced its strategic effectiveness in representing the kingdom of God.

It leads to hypocrisy and a double life

Because of the shame involved it has been a taboo subject in the church for a very long time. Christians therefore sin in secret and the result of the shame and hiddenness is often a double life.

Sexual idolatry ultimately leads to God’s judgment

These truths are not pleasant ones to hear, but we have to. Such is the strength of the hold of sexual sin on our lives that very often the sobering reality of its consequences is what motivates us to radically submit to God’s power to break free from it.

The most powerful rendering of this truth is found in Romans 1 where Paul describes the evolution of God's judgment that comes as a result of persistently worshiping the created instead of the Creator.

It is also vividly depicted in the account of Balaam who was hired by Balak to curse the Israelites. When he could not overtly do this because of God's blessing that was upon His people, he nevertheless succeeded when he advised Balak to entice the Israelites into sexual sin (Numbers 22 – 24 and Revelation 2:14). As a result of this 24,000 people were killed in God's judgment.

Why is the lure of sexual sin so strong?

A simple answer to this is because we believe the illusion that it presents to us – an illusion that it is able to meet our needs.

Some of our most fundamental needs include the need to be loved well, to feel we belong and to be nurtured. In his book *Community 101*, Gilbert Bilezekian says:

Each one of us hides an awful secret. Buried deep within every human soul throbs a muted pain that never goes away. It is a lifelong yearning for that one love, the languishing in our inner selves for an all-consuming intensity of intimacy,..... a heart-need to surrender all that we are to a bond that will never fail.

When we take time to become silent and to listen, we may hear the scream from the depths of our being, the clamour to bear our souls and to reveal the mystery of our true selves. Just listen, listen closely....It is the distant echo of the wail in the garden at the loss of innocence, of the grieving after the remembrance of shared freedom, of the release of body and soul to the embrace of absolute oneness. Our mourning is for the closeness that was ours by right of creation. Our grief is for the gift lost in the turmoil of rebellion.

In its Godly form sex is the expression of this growing intimacy. An intimacy that God intended should be ours within the parameters of a heterosexual marriage covenant. That is what makes sex a gift from God.

False intimacy that comes through sexual sin promises to meet these needs for us and that is why it is so enticing. Solomon gives a masterful rendering of the process of seduction, the foolishness of the young man who is being enticed, the promise of love that will be enjoyed and the disastrous outcome of the tryst in Proverbs 7:

I spotted a young man without any sense...arriving at the corner of the street where she lives...it was dusk the evening came on...just then a woman met him – she'd been lying in wait for him, dressed to seduce him. Brazen and brash she was, restless and roaming...walking the streets, loitering in the mall...she threw her arms around him and kissed him and said..."I have come to find you, hoping to catch sight of your face – and here you are...come let us make love all night...my husband's not home, he's away on business...soon she has him eating out of her hand...before you know it he is trotting behind her like a calf to a butcher shop...so, friends, listen to me...don't fool around with

a woman like that; don't even stroll in her neighborhood...countless victims have come under her spell; she's the death of many a poor man...she runs a halfway house to hell, fits you with a shroud and a coffin. (The Message).

Is there a way out?

By the grace of God, yes. Many people can testify to that. The way out has to start with an acknowledgement of one's problem and the fact that you are powerless to break its hold over your life by yourself. It has to be confessed to God as a sin of idolatry followed by a surrender to Him to set you free.

This surrender to Him does not take place in isolation. It has to be done in an accountable setting. We must be willing to confess our sins and our behaviour patterns and lifestyles in the presence of those whom we can trust and who will challenge us about our ongoing behaviour. Because addiction thrives in the dark, we have to choose a way of openness very deliberately.

Because our vulnerability to is often rooted in unresolved emotional needs, it will be necessary to receive healing prayer for those unmet needs. It is true to say that without receiving this kind of healing we may experience times of de-escalating behaviour, but that does not mean that we have been set free from our problem.

The final and most important aspect of our way of escape is developing an authentic personal devotional life with God. He is the One who will reclaim our true desire.