

Why have so many 'good' men fallen to sexual sin?
August 15, 2021 * Langford Community Church * Graham Gladstone



This morning we have another great question to think about –

Why have so many "good men" fallen into the trap of Sexual sins? It seems like an epidemic. For me, it began with Bill Cosby, a comedian that we related to and loved. Then Presidents JFK, Clinton & Trump. Recently it was Ravi Zacharias - so hard to believe - and Morgan Freeman. Is this immorality another sign of the End Times?

Good question. And one that's all too relevant. Just this week, we've seen another case of this very thing. The governor of New York, who a year ago was a hero for leading the battle against COVID-19, this week had to resign because his years of sexual misconduct had come to light. 'Good men' seem to fall to sexual sin all the time.

Now technically, I think that this person has asked two questions here – first – 'Why have so many 'good men' fallen into the trap of sexual sins?' and second, this person has asked 'Is this kind of sin another sign of the end times?' We need to look at them both, but I think the second question here we can take care of pretty quickly and then move on, because the first question is really the key here. So let's take care of the second question and then we can get onto the first. 'Is sexual immorality a sign of the end times?'

Short answer, yes. According to Jude verse 18 "18 ..." "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly desires" (which I take to include ungodly sexual desires) and 2 Timothy 3:1-6 says that in the last days, there will be men who "6...worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires."

So yes, sexual immorality is a sign of the end times, but then again, according to that same passage in 2 Timothy, self-centredness, greed, pride and unforgiveness are also signs of the end times. And to be honest, all of those things have been pretty common over the past two thousand years, so I don't think that we can say conclusively that this generation's sexual infidelities are definite signs of the end times.

We CAN though think more about why it's happening – why 'good men' fall into the trap of sexual sin. We've seen the consequences of sexual immorality and yet, people still seem to do it. Why? Why do these 'good men' fall into the trap of sexual sin? And although we don't hear about it as often, there are women who do the same thing – so why do apparently 'good people of both genders' fall into the trap of sexual sin?

Well, to be honest, there are probably as many reasons as there are offenders, but underlying them all, there is one big theological reason – without God, every one of us has a sinful nature that causes us to chase after sinful desires.

Paul gives us a picture of it in Ephesians 2, starting in verse 1. In Ephesians 2:1, Paul says - NIV
Ephesians 2:1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,
2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.
3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath (Eph 2:1-3 NIV).

Paul is painting a picture for us of human nature without God and it's not pretty, is it? We were made in the image of God and still bear the image of God, but our nature got twisted when we turned our back on Him. We like to talk in our culture about 'good people,' but the reality of it is, at least theologically speaking, that while we may be 'morally good' people, we're not 'spiritually good.' Because we have all chosen to ignore God, the fundamental orientation of our hearts is away from Him and so we have this sin nature that keeps us from Him.

And Paul pulls back the curtain on everyday society and shows us what we're really like. We're like the walking dead, shambling around, slaves to our own desires. We don't really care what God thinks and so we make gratifying the cravings of our own sinful nature the main motivating factor in our lives. We go after what feels good, whatever it is that we desire.

And if I think back to my pre-Christian experience, I can see that Paul's totally right. I didn't really care what God wanted; all I really cared about was what would feel good, what would get me ahead in the world. Sure, there were social and legal restrictions in place to limit some of those desires, but still, if there was a way to gratify the cravings of my sinful nature, I would find a way to do it.

And that's what guys like Bill Cosby and Morgan Freeman and Andrew Cuomo and Bill Clinton were doing too. They were following the ways of the world that say that unchecked sexuality is good and desirable. They were listening to their sinful nature that said 'If I do this, I'll feel good' and so they did what they wanted. Their power and influence gave them the opportunity to act on their own desires, and so they did what they wanted, whether it was consensual or not and gratified the cravings of their own sinful nature. In the moment I'm sure it seemed like a good idea, but in reality, they were dead in sin, slaves to their own desires.

These men fell into the trap of sexual sin because they let their sinful nature lead them right into it. They thought they were pursuing something good (for them) but it led them headlong into sin and trouble.

Now, just to clarify, I'm not saying that sex is in itself a bad thing. It's not. God created sex. He made us sexual beings who have the capacity to connect intimately with another person and He gave us marriage as the context in which to exercise that sexuality. Sex in the confines of marriage is good and valuable. But sex is a bit like fire – good in your fireplace, but not so much when it gets outside of it; same with sex – good within marriage, but dangerous outside of it – and many people have been lured by it and they've gotten burned by that fire. Again, because of their sinful nature, they were pursuing something good in a bad way and it led them into trouble.

And that's not just true for celebrities. That's true for all of us. Without God, we are all Ephesians 2:1 people, gratifying the cravings of our own sinful nature.

But that's not a great place to be. Just ask Andrew Cuomo. Just ask Bill Cosby. Just as the old me. What seemed to be good crippled our souls.

But you know what? God was not content to leave us there. Ephesians 2:3, we were by nature objects of wrath. Paul actually says in Romans 8:13 that "... if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die."

BUT – Paul goes on in Ephesians 2-
4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,
5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved (Eph 2:3-5 NIV).

Just listen to how Paul describes God. WE turned our backs on Him. WE followed the ways of the world and had no interest in what He had to say and yet... He is SO full of love, so driven by His commitment to us, so rich in mercy, so lavish with His grace, that even when we were still sinners, He came in the person of His Son Jesus and died for us. He made us alive in Him. He didn't want to leave us in the mess that we'd gotten ourselves into; instead, He came to redeem us and to give us a new nature that would live for Him.

That's why that 'old is gone, new is come' from last week is so important. Because although we were once enslaved to sin, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature, we when receive the lavish mercy of God, we are made alive in Christ, set free to live in His grace. God takes us, once dead in sin, and makes us alive in Christ, ready to live for Him. He frees us from our sin nature and lights our way, so that we don't have to stumble into the traps that sin lays for us. Instead we live for Him. We were dead in sin and God made us alive in Christ. Our lives should then reflect that reality.

So let's go back to the beginning and think about our question in light of everything we've seen here.

Why do 'good men' like Clinton and Cosby and Cuomo fall into the trap of sexual sin? They fall into that trap because they are not 'good men.' Their reputations may be good, but without God, they (all of us) are fallen people who pursue our own worldly desires.

Should it surprise us when we hear of other 'good men' or women for that matter who have fallen into sin? Well, no. Sadly. It is our fallen human nature to pursue our own desires and that trajectory leads us to sin.

But, we're not doomed to stay like that. God, because of His great love for us, because He is rich in mercy, made us alive in Christ so that we can avoid those traps...

Which raises another interesting question. What about Ravi Zacharias? What about when a Christian, who apparently has been made alive in Christ, still falls into those traps? Let me say two things about the Christian's relationship to sin and the Christian's struggle with sin.

So first, the Christian's relationship to sin.

Ephesians 2, when we put our faith in Jesus, we are made alive with Christ. We are set free from sin and we are given the Holy Spirit to help us avoid it. Over in Romans 8, Paul says -

12 Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation--but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it.
13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, 14 because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Paul puts it even more bluntly in Galatians 5 –

4 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

If we are alive in Christ, then we should be dead to sin. It's part of our old life. It's inconsistent with the new.

And yet, it still lurks around, even spiritually good men and women. And that's why we can talk about our struggle with sin. The Christian's struggle with sin.

When we come to Christ, we are set free from sin, and yet it continues to prowl around our door, waiting for opportunities to trip us up. We're no longer chained to it, but it hangs around like a mangy dog looking for food. That's why Paul has to say in 1 Corinthians 6:18 'Flee from sexual immorality' and again in Romans 13:14 - 13 Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. 4 Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature. (Rom 13:13-14 NIV).

When I read stuff like this, I often think 'Gee what kind of church was this that its pastors had to constantly remind the people not to get drunk and engage in sexual immorality' but then again, we may still be having those battles in our hearts.

Getting ready for this message, I found this book called 'When good men are tempted' and it's about this very thing – Christians who are tempted by sexual sin. (It's a good book; I got a copy for the library here). In it, the author writes –

Every man, Christian or otherwise, otherwise, has his own personal battle with lust. Those who disclaim such a battle are either in denial or lying. I guess they could also be dying and just too sick to think about sex. But even dying men may have sex on their mind. My eighty-seven-year-old father was talking about sex just hours before dying of pneumonia. The point is, if you're a man you're wired to enjoy the beauty of a woman, and that enjoyment can take your mind and body to some sinful places with severe consequences.

Perkins, William. When Good Men Are Tempted (Kindle Locations 131-135). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

And yet, he argues, that because there's something of a taboo about sexual sin in the church, that Christian men (and women for that matter) are isolated from one another and unable to get help from one another in their struggle against sin. We need accountability sometimes; I think that's really what Ravi Zacharias needed; and if we can help each other in our struggle with sin – sexual or otherwise – then we need to help. Talk to me or talk to someone you trust. Because of His great love for you, God made you alive in Christ. You don't have to live as though you were dead in sin. We can win this struggle with sin.

So, to conclude, why do good men fall into the trap of sexual sin? They fall into the trap of sexual sin (all kinds of sin, really) because they are following the desires of their sinful nature right into the traps set for them by sin. But God, who is rich in mercy, has set us free. So let's live by His Spirit and help each other in our struggle with sin.