

physical stamina. He was like a new man. But there were scars. Those scars remind him what his body used to be like.

Sexual scars may remain to remind you, but your former failures cannot destroy you if you come to Christ. Like a caterpillar that sheds its cocoon, you can leave that behind forever.



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Destroying the Future

By Jim Elliff

The opposite sex—like any high school or university student, I had dreams of finding just the right one of that variety to spend my life with. In my dreams the standards were reasonable enough—brains, wit, stunning beauty, winning personality, the blindness to think I was great, and an exciting walk with God.

But for many of my friends, the dreams turned to nightmares. Sex prior to marriage took them on a helicopter ride that eventually smashed them on the hard pavement, seriously diminishing their chances of having a marriage that was pure and exciting—not to mention, lasting.

What happens after sex? Do earlier actions decimate a good future?



Sadly, in many cases, the answer is “yes.” Our actions do have consequences. Explosives that are loaded into life today may be detonated at the most inopportune times.

Like dreaded land mines, they often leave little behind of what promised to be so good and right. Sex prior to marriage, for instance, has a long history of breeding distrust in marriages and causing divorce.

It goes without saying that experience often leads to habit. A person having sex outside of marriage is easy prey for more. Although we are shocked when we hear that someone had an adulterous affair, it is probable that he or she had a sexual habit, mental or physical, for some time prior. A secretive lifestyle of disobedience often comes from the initial taste of the

stolen waters of sex—one experience or thought producing another and another, dulling the conscience and weakening the resolve.

The biggest problem with promiscuity is that it ends up in eternal ruin. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6: 9-10 that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God:

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

You may dupe others, but you cannot fool God—so don't deceive yourself. Sin leads to judgment. It is true that every person has sinned and deserves hell, but here Paul is making a case for steering clear of the top ten temptations facing the Corinthians, a culture apparently much like our own.

But God can change a life of sexual promiscuity. After cataloging some types of people who will not enter heaven Paul continues:

And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.
1 Corinthians 6:11

There is a lot of hope here. Once caught in the web of lust, does a perpetually sinful lifestyle have to be your only option? No, through Christ you can be liberated—and that's not too strong a word.

Though there can never be perfection in the Christian this side of heaven, there is a huge reversal. A true Christian will be able to say, "Because of Christ, that's what I was but not what I am!" God washes, sanctifies and justifies—just what you need to escape the dictatorial rule of your sinful desires and to be assured of heaven.

When God washes you, He forgives your sins, removing the guilt. That is, through Christ's death He wipes out the guilt and gives you a clean heart. Guilt is not only emotional, but is also *real*. It's good for the feeling of guilt to be removed, but the true problem is the *actual* guilt.

He sanctifies you. That is, God "sets you apart" to Himself as exclusively His. And after setting you apart for His own use, He can make you like Him through the Holy Spirit He puts inside you. This is like God stamping His name on your forehead to designate that you are His child forever.

And God justifies all who come to Him. Justification means that, even though you are a sinful person, you are nonetheless declared righteous in God's eyes, not because of what you have done or not done, but on the basis of what Christ alone has done. His death for you is accepted in place of your death. You are justified by faith in Christ's work and not your works.

It would be wrong of me to say that sexual activity outside of marriage will not cause you serious trouble. As tantalizing as it seems for the moment, failure to follow God's prescription for sex is a formula for calamity. But coming to Christ by faith changes things. When God washes, sanctifies, and justifies, you are not the same anymore. And you're guaranteed a future in heaven as well.

When my friend came out of the hospital after surgery, you could see the improvement in his