

October 5, 2014

“Honor God with Your Body”

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

You say, "I am allowed to do anything"—but not everything is good for you. And even though "I am allowed to do anything," I must not become a slave to anything. You say, "Food was made for the stomach, and the stomach for food." (This is true, though someday God will do away with both of them.) But you can't say that our bodies were made for sexual immorality. They were made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about our bodies. And God will raise us from the dead by his power, just as he raised our Lord from the dead.

Don't you realize that your bodies are actually parts of Christ? Should a man take his body, which is part of Christ, and join it to a prostitute? Never! And don't you realize that if a man joins himself to a prostitute, he becomes one body with her? For the Scriptures say, "The two are united into one." But the person who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him.

Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.

Jack Benny and George Burns met as young performers on the vaudeville circuit and remained friends for life. One day at lunch, Benny wrestled with the problem of whether or not to butter his bread.

"I like butter on my bread," he said. "But my diet strictly forbids butter. Maybe I should call Mary and ask her what to do."

"Jack," Burns said, "don't be ridiculous. You're a grown man. You should be able to decide, without your wife's help, whether or not to butter your own bread."

"You're right," Benny said. "I'll just have the butter, that's all."

When the waiter arrived with the check, Burns pointed to Benny and said, "He's paying."

"What?" Benny said. "Why should I have to pay the whole bill?"

"Because if you don't," Burns said, "I'll tell Mary about the butter."

“I am allowed to do anything.” Apparently this was a famous catchphrase of Paul’s. He uses it a few times in this letter to the Corinthians. He probably used the phrase when he was in Corinth and preached in the church. The Corinthians began to use it after Paul left, but they used it as an excuse to do anything they pleased. Obviously, that is not what Paul meant. Paul was referring to freedom in Christ, but he never meant for it to allow them or us to disregard Christian morality and ethics. What was Paul referring

to when he spoke of freedom in Christ? As an example he applied it to no longer being obligated to keep the Jewish ceremonial laws when it came to foods he could and could not eat

But the church misinterpreted what Paul meant by the phrase. Paul was not referring to things known to be wrong by civil law or in Scripture. Yet, the Corinthians broadened Paul's idea to include satisfaction of all bodily hungers. So Paul closed this loophole once and for all when he writes, (v12a) "You say, 'I am allowed to do anything'—but not everything is good for you."

So Paul give the first guideline when it comes to what we are allowed to do. As a Christian what you do must be beneficial to yourself and others. Not everything is good for you. We can make a case here to eat healthier, or to quit smoking, or keep other drugs out of your system for example. There may even be some activities that are not bad for others but they are bad for you – you know you can't do those things; or there are activities that are not bad for you but they are bad for others – don't tempt other to do what for them is wrong. A Christian has no right to participate in activities which may appear innocent but which are harmful to themselves or others.

A second guideline, in addition to being beneficial Paul also limits freedom by the idea of self-discipline. And says, (v12b) even though "I am allowed to do anything," I must not become a slave to anything. Some actions are not sinful in themselves, but they are not appropriate because they can control your life and lead you away from God. You should not do these actions because you do not want to be a slave to or be mastered by anything other than God.

Christians have freedom to use and enjoy all things that come from God. But Christians should not abuse this freedom and hurt themselves or others. Drinking too much leads to alcoholism, gluttony leads to obesity. But we can also become slaves to money, sports, television; or we can become slaves to worry, perfectionism, or wanting to win the favor or approval of others; or any one thing that controls our life or robs our devotion to Christ or service to others. Christians who have been in the church for many years can easily excuse sins such as gossip, bitterness, an unforgiving spirit, lust, or withholding money from God's work. We all have our addictions. We must be on alert for those desires that can master us. What God has allowed His children to enjoy must not grow into a bad habit that controls them.

Paul uses the illustration of eating and sex to make his point. He persists in warning against sexual immorality. He talked about it in chapter 5 and again here in chapter 6.

It appears that some in the Corinthian church imagined that it was just as permissible to have unrestrained sex, as it was to eat any kind of food, especially since sex was so rampant in their culture, as it is in our culture today. We are free to eat and drink

whatever we want, but surely we should not be gluttons or alcoholics and if we have some medical condition we ought to avoid foods that would make that condition worse, even though we are free to eat them. In the same sexual immorality, pornography, sex outside of marriage, adultery etc. are wrong even though it may be acceptable and lawful in our society and considered our liberty. Paul has already stated his case that though we have freedom, not everything is good or good for us and we don't want to become a slave to anything. Then Paul, in order to make his case, gives his arguments and his **first argument** is this:

(v13) You say, "Food was made for the stomach, and the stomach for food." (This is true, though someday God will do away with both of them.) But you can't say that our bodies were made for sexual immorality. They were made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about our bodies.

Here is Paul's first argument against this sin, our bodies were not made for sexual immorality. They were made for the Lord. Wow! If you are a believer, indulging in any kind of sexual sin, this ought to touch you and break you. Your body belongs to the Lord. The world does not believe in God or in life after death and so anything goes. But why are Christians living that way? Even though these bodies are temporary that is no excuse to stuff them with food or indulge in sex. God formed your body, honor Him with it. He did not form your body to be abused, it was never formed for sin, it was formed to honor and serve Him. It was meant to be an instrument of righteousness and holiness.

Paul says our bodies were made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about our bodies. He is not trying to ruin your fun, He is trying to keep you from ruin. He is Lord and should be Lord of your body... your body was made by the Lord and for the Lord. He doesn't hate the body, He loves and cares for it. Your body belongs to God and we must take care that we don't use what belongs to God as if it were our own, and dishonor Him.

Paul's **second argument** is found in ...

(v14) And God will raise us from the dead by his power, just as he raised our Lord from the dead.

One day, as we read in ...

Philippians 3:21

He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control.

It is an honor that these bodies will be raised and changed into glorious bodies like Jesus when He was honored and raised. So let's not abuse these bodies by sin, keep them pure to be raised like Christ's glorious body. The hope of the resurrection should restrain Christians from dishonoring their bodies with the lusts of the flesh.

A **third argument** is the honor our bodies already have (v15)

Don't you realize that your bodies are actually parts of Christ? Should a man take his body, which is part of Christ, and join it to a prostitute? Never!

Your body was not only made by God and made for God it is actually, you are actually part of Christ. Later in 1Corinthians Paul will say,

1 Corinthians 12:27

All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it.

Not only is your soul united to Christ by faith, but your whole being is part of His mystical Body with Christ as the head. Your very flesh is part of the mystical body of Christ. How can you take this body that is part of Christ and use it in any vile manner? We are meant to be repulsed by such a thought.

(v16-17) And don't you realize that if a man joins himself to a prostitute, he becomes one body with her? For the Scriptures say, "The two are united into one." But the person who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him.

Shall a Christian who is in such union with Christ the Lord that they are joined, one in spirit with Christ be also joined with that which is vile or sinful? God forbid. Can we offer a greater indignity to Him or to ourselves? Is it no wonder Paul say (v18) Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body.

At one time we sought love/respect from places other than God ...

1 Corinthians 6:11

Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Paul's fourth argument

(v19) Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God?

"Don't you realize" means you should realize, but you missed it or have forgotten. Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. A temple is a place where God dwells. God has given us the Holy Spirit. You do not belong to yourself, you are joined to, yield to, consecrated to, set apart for, inhabited by the Holy Spirit given to you by God. We are possessed by and for God. Don't desecrate His temple. In Corinth there were pagan temples where sex was an expression of worship. In our society today we worship sex.

A temple is a place of worship, prayer, communion with God, the Presence of God... and so should our body be use for such high purposes as the temple of the Holy Spirit. Why did Jesus over turn tables in the temple? Because there were things that were keeping people from worship, prayer, and communion with God. What do you need to

remove because it keeps you from communion with God. You are His temple and His temple must be kept holy.

Paul's **fifth argument**:

(v20) You do not belong to yourself for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.

We ought to be honoring God with our bodies, you do not belong to yourself for God bought you with a high price, a very high price of the death of His Son (we remembered that today by taking Holy Communion). This is the gospel, the Good News; We were purchased by God for God through the death of His Son for us.

Since you belong to God and He owns you let others see God in and through you. Honor and bring glory to God with your body. Be of service to your Lord alone. Live not for your own pleasure but according to God's will and for His glory. This is absolutely necessary to keep the body from immorality. It is both an obligation and a sign of gratitude and devotion.

"The only cure for addiction is the gospel. We will not find the power to resist the pull toward lesser desires until we discover a more powerful desire that we long to fulfill, a desire the Spirit creates within our hearts when the Father forgives us. We must discover our desire for God."

- Dr. Larry Crabb, *Shattered Dreams*

Questions for Reflection:

- What lesser desires do you pursue when you feel empty?
- As you ponder the cross and the heart of God for you, what desires rise?
- How does that stirred desire for God impact your battle with areas of recurrent sin?

You are free, "allowed to do anything"—but not everything is good for you. And you must not become a slave to anything. Why? Because:

"Your Body Belongs to God"

1. Your body was made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about your body.
2. God will raise us from the dead by His power, just as He raised our Lord from the dead.
3. Your bodies are actually parts of Christ
4. Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit
5. You were purchased by the blood of Jesus, honor God with your body.