

## Glorify God

### 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

I need your help this morning. What are the things you have heard people say to justify their inappropriate behavior? Let me start the list:

“I’m free, white and over twenty-one.”

“You can’t tell me what to do!”

“You’re not my mother!”

“You’re not my boss!”

“Oh, you are so old fashion!”

“Everyone is doing it!”

Take a minute to add to the list and share with your neighbor.

In a sermon entitled “Connected by Grace” John R. Bucka of the House of Hope Lutheran Church of New Hope, Minnesota states that he remembers arguments from his youth. His Roman Catholic friend said, “I can do anything I want, and all I have to do is go to confession. John responded, “I can do anything I want, and I don’t have to do a thing! God will forgive me.” In his sermon he went on to say that it no longer matters our “denominational flavor” or age, we desire to do anything we want. Even in marriage there is tendency to want to do what we want when we want without regard to our spouse’s desires.

In our scripture today Paul is writing his second letter to the church at Corinth (his first letter is missing so not to confuse us when we read his letters this letter is called 1 Corinthians). It seems like the Corinthians were very much like us in modern times with our political and religious leaders engaging in extra marital affairs to the detriment of public trust, and others looking for love in all the wrong places, and marriages falling apart daily, the problems are familiar to us. Or if you came from my generation we said things like: “If it is good to you, it’s good for

you.” “You can’t miss what you can’t measure.” Well, you get the idea. There was a great deal of sexual laxness in the city of Corinth. It was a permissive society.

Another factor was that the Greeks always looked down on the body. There was a proverbial saying, “The body is a tomb.” Epictetus said, “I am a poor soul shackled to a corpse.” The important thing was the soul, the spirit of a man; the body was a thing that did not matter. That produced one of two attitudes. Either it issued in the most rigorous asceticism in which everything was done to subject and humiliate the desires and instincts of the body. Or it was taken to mean that, since the body was of no importance, you could do what you liked with it; you could let it satisfy its appetites. What complicated this was the doctrine of Christian freedom which Paul preached. If the Christian is free, then Christians are free to do as they like, especially with this completely unimportant body.

So, the Corinthians argued, in a way that they thought very enlightened, let the body have its way. The stomach was made for food and food for the stomach, they went on. Food and the stomach naturally and inevitably go together. In precisely the same way the body is made for its instincts; it is made for the sexual act and the sexual act is made for it; therefore let the desires of the body have their way. Paul’s answer is clear. Stomach and food are passing things; the day will come when they will both pass away.

But the body, the personality, the person as a whole will not pass away; the Christian is made for union with Christ in this world and still closer union hereafter. The Christian’s body rightly belongs to Christ and has no business doing immoral acts. Paul also pointed out that God created sex when God made the first man and woman, and therefore God has the right to tell us how to use it and the Bible is the “owner’s manual” and it must be obeyed.

Paul asked his readers to consider God (verses 12-14). God created our bodies and one day God will resurrect them in glory. In view of the fact that our bodies have such a wonderful origin, and an even more wonderful future, how can we use them for evil purposes?

The Corinthians had two arguments to defend their sensuality. First, “All things are lawful for me” (1 Cor. 6:12). This was a popular phrase in Corinth, based on a false view of Christian freedom. However Paul taught “**We have not been set free so that we can enter into a new kind of bondage!**” As Christians, we must ask ourselves, “Will this enslave me? Is this activity really profitable for my spiritual life?”

Their second argument was, “Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats” (1 Cor. 6:13). They treated sex as an appetite to be satisfied and not as a gift to be cherished and used carefully. What they did not understand was sex outside of marriage and gluttony both are sinful and both bring disastrous consequences. Just because we have certain normal desires, given by God at Creation, does not mean that we must give in to them and always satisfy them. There may be excitement and enjoyment in casual sexual encounters, but they are not profitable in the long-run, they do not bring trust and commitment, nor do they honor God.

Next Paul asked the Corinthians to consider God the Son (verses 15-18). The believer’s body is a member of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12ff). How can we be joined to Christ and joined to sin at the same time? Such a thought astounds us. Yet some of the Corinthians saw no harm in visiting the temple prostitutes (there were 1,000 of them at the temple of Aphrodite) and committing fornication.

Jesus Christ bought us with a price (1 Cor. 6:20), and therefore our bodies belong to Christ. We are one spirit with the Lord and we must yield our bodies to Christ as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1–2). If you begin each day by surrendering

your body to Christ, it will make a great deal of difference in what you do with your body during the day.

Paul warned that sexual sin is the most serious sin a person can commit against his body, for it involves the whole person (1 Cor. 6:18). Being “male” and “female” involves the total person. Therefore, sexual experiences affects the total personality. The man and woman leave the parental home to begin a new home, one based on commitment of love and faithfulness to each other.

Then Paul asked the Corinthians to consider the Holy Spirit (verses 19-20). God the Father created our bodies; God the Son redeemed them and made them part of His body; and God the Spirit indwells our bodies and makes them the very temple of God. How can we defile God’s temple by using our bodies for immorality?

It may be that Paul is here describing not only the individual believer, but also the local church. Each local assembly is a “body” of people united to Jesus Christ. The conduct of individual members affects the spiritual life of the entire church. The lesson is clear: “Glorify God in your body!” The Holy Spirit was given for the purpose of glorifying Jesus Christ (John 16:14). The Spirit can use our bodies to adore and praise God (Phil. 1:20–21). Our special relationship to the Holy Spirit brings with it a special responsibility. Therefore God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are all involved in what we do with our bodies.

We must remember that the grace of God can change the sinner’s life. “And such were some of you” (1 Cor. 6:11). It is wonderful how faith in Christ makes a sinner into a “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17, 21). And it is important that we live like those who are a part of God’s new creation. We are not our own. We belong to the Father who made us, the Son who redeemed us, and the Spirit who indwells us. We

also belong to the people of God, the church, and our sins can weaken the testimony and infect the fellowship.<sup>1 2</sup>

So Paul's battle cry to the Corinthians and to us is "Glorify God with your body." Because God's Spirit dwells in us we have become a temple of God; and so our very bodies are sacred. And Christ died to save not a bit of a person, but the whole person, body and soul. Christ gave his life to give each of us a redeemed soul and a pure body. Because of that your body and my body are not our own to do with as we please; our bodies belong to Christ and we must use them, not for the satisfaction of our own lusts, but for the glory of Christ.

It is Paul's insistence that, though he is free to do anything, he will let nothing master him. The great fact of the Christian faith is, not that it makes us free to sin, but that it makes us free not to sin. It is so easy to allow habits to master us; but the Christian strength enables us to master them. When one really experiences the Christian power, we become, not the slave of our bodies, but their master. Often a one says, "I will do what I like," when they mean that they will indulge the habit or passion which has me in its grip; it is only when a I have the strength of Christ in me that I can really say, "I will do what I like," and not, "I will satisfy the things that have me in their power."

It is also Paul's insistence that we are not our own. There is no such thing in this world as a self-made person. The Christian is one who thinks not of their rights but of their debts. We can never do what we like, because we never belong to

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<sup>1</sup>Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. 1 Co 6:9

<sup>2</sup>Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:516

ourselves; we must always do what Christ likes, because Christ bought us at the cost of his life.<sup>3 4</sup>

After listening you may realize that you have been enslaved to powers other than God and asking yourself what you can do. Remember that God can cleanse all sins (even sexual sins) and make sinners into new creatures in Christ. You can give your life to Christ, let the Spirit take control and live a life that gives God honor and glory. Then you can say with the rest of us...because of all that God had done for me, I have an obligation to God to use my body for God's service and God's glory. Amen.

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<sup>3</sup> Barclay, William, lecturer in the University of Glasgow (Hrsg.): *The Letters to the Corinthians*. Philadelphia : The Westminster Press, 2000, c1975 (The Daily Study Bible Series, Rev. Ed), S. 54

<sup>4</sup>Ellingworth, Paul ; Hatton, Howard ; Ellingworth, Paul: *A Handbook on Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians*. New York : United Bible Societies, 1995 (UBS Handbook Series; Helps for Translators), S. 133