

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

"The Limit Of Liberty"

The flesh is so subtle, so crafty in its ability to justify sin. It wants to be satisfied... or gratified at any expense. It takes & twists even good news for selfish gain. We start perverting biblical principles in order to satisfy sinful desires. We'll take the words of Jesus, "*Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.*"¹ Or the apostle Paul, "*...where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*"² Words like, "*I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself;*"³ Or "*To the pure all things are pure,*"⁴ & We'll completely void them of context in order to create some sense of justification or rationalization as to why it is we can partake in some kind of sinful situation. We want to associate liberty w/sin, & holiness w/legalism.

But we need to understand what Paul is explaining in our passage today to the Corinthians. That freedom in Christ is not freedom *to* sin, it's freedom *from* sin. We've been liberated from the *bondage* of sin. Why then voluntarily enslave ourselves to sinful appetites? Our bodies weren't created to satisfy sin, but for fellowship/union with *Christ*, that we might bring glory to *God*.

Vs 12

Do you see the balance that he's bringing into focus for us? "All things are lawful for me" – Meaning, "All things are permissible" or "I have the right to do anything". (Let's not forget that we've already discussed "our rights" versus God's glory). However, all things are *not* beneficial, or helpful for my spiritual growth or my relationship w/God.

& I could be wrong, but in the back of my mind, this was probably something that Paul had taught them when he was w/them. You know: the legalists would come along behind him & say things like, "You can only worship on the Sabbath", "You have to be circumcised", "You've got to wear this & you can't touch that." On & on it would go. & Paul would say, "Look, do what you want! There's tremendous liberty & freedom *in Christ*. If you wanna worship on Saturday, you can... But since Jesus rose on Sunday, we've elected *that* day. In reality, *every day* is a day we worship & honor the Lord!"

They're saying you can only eat these certain kinds of meats. I'm telling you, eat what you want! It's not about what you *do*, it's about trusting in what Christ has *done*. – But they had taken this principle of freedom in Christ & allowed it to translate into ungodly arenas.

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Jn 8:36]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). [2 Co 3:17]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ro 14:14]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [1 Pt 1:15]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

You see, Paul had taught them that Christ was the end of the law for all who believe. Outside of Christ, the whole world will be judged by the standards of the law. The problem of course is that the law can't provide righteousness, it can only shine the light on our sin. & That was the *point* of the law, to show us our sin & our need for a Savior. It takes me & makes me see how desperate I truly am. Even if I can somehow obey it outwardly, I'm breaking it constantly in my heart & that's what God is interested in, my heart!

So I'm brought to a place where I see & understand that I can't save myself & I need *someone* to save me. It's the same conclusion Paul draws for us at the end of Rom Ch 7, right? **"O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"**⁵ He kept doing what he didn't want to, & never did what he knew he needed to... The next Vs draws the conclusion, **"I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!"**⁶ **Jesus fulfilled the law on our behalf & through faith, He accredits His righteousness to us. The law no longer has dominion over us. We are now free from the law through J.C. our Lord... My entry into heaven isn't predicated upon my performance, but rather His accomplishment on my behalf...**

So, it seems the Corinthians were taking this principle of freedom, & Paul saying, "Do what you want, you're no longer under the law" & using it to justify sin in their lives. "I'm free in Christ!" Paul would say, "Yes, but not free *to* sin. You're free *from* sin." Be careful of turning liberty into license, of using freedom as a cloak, or a covering for vice (using it to justify sin that has a grip on your life). To the Galatians he said it like this, **"For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh,"**⁷

Paul would say, "Look at the situation through this lens. 'Is what I'm about to do going to benefit my walk w/Jesus? Will it be helpful in my relationship w/God?'" Because **not everything is going to build you up. In fact, it may well pull you down.** – We need to understand that it's possible to exercise our freedom in such a way as to place ourselves back in bondage... You may have the freedom to drink alcohol. But starting down that slippery slope could place you in bondage. Are you truly being free or are you serving the lust/desire of the flesh? Are you serving the flesh or walking in freedom?

You see? If we're not careful we'll exchange liberty for slavery. Too often when people say, "I'll do what I want." What they mean is that they'll feed that passion or that habit that has them in its grip.

⁵ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Ro 7:24). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁶ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Ro 7:25). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁷ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Ga 5:13). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Do you remember the fruit of the Spirit? Galatians 5. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness... self-control. That's the one that gets us, isn't it? We lack self-control *in the name of liberty/freedom*.

That's why Paul says, "I will not be brought under the power of any." He won't compromise his walk w/Christ in the name of freedom. The mathematics of sin are always the same. Sin will *add* sorrow, *subtract* joy, *multiply* problems & *divide* your heart.

Now the specific sin he's in reference to (as we'll see) is sexual sin. & In the Corinthian culture there was a lot of it. 1,000 temple prostitutes would solicit men to "worship" every night. It was literally a religion. So in some regard they were seeking to justify what they were doing (as we'll see). But rather than maintaining self-control; truth be told, they were mastered *by* & in bondage *to* their own sexual appetites. Notice.

Vs 13-14

Here's the short of it. The body is not for sexual gratification but for God's glory. – Evidently there was a proverb of sorts that they were using to help justify their position. "Foods for the stomach & the stomach for foods..." Which is to say, "It's a natural function, a natural passion, my body has an urge to eat, so I feed it. I give the body what it wants. My body wants sex, so I meet up w/a prostitute." They were saying essentially that physical appetites are what they are, give the body what it wants... If you're body is craving food, give it food. If it's craving sex, give it sex... It's only natural to indulge the appetites of the body.

Couple things to remember w/this. The sex drive is a natural thing, it's a good thing w/in the context for which God designed it (marriage). The Bible is clear that marriage bed is undefiled. Sex w/in the context of marriage only serves to strengthen & fortify & unify a healthy marriage bond. But we need to remember that a *lustful* sexual appetite is *not* what God gave us; it's what *Adam* gave us when he fell (sinned). – Outside of the marriage bed we find unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases... all kinds of problems can be the result of sex outside of marriage (not the least of which is the fact that it's sin before God). Warren Wiersbe said this, "**Sex outside of marriage is like a man robbing a bank: he gets something, but it is not his and he will one day pay for it. Sex within marriage can be like a person putting money into a bank: there is safety, security, and he will collect dividends.**" But the Corinthians were like, "A bodily appetite is a bodily appetite." Paul says, "No. That's faulty logic." & He tells us why. – Food for the stomach & the stomach for food... *However...*

The *body* is *not* for sexual immorality, it's *for the Lord* & the Lord for the body. As for the biological process of eating/digesting, eating again... God will do away w/all that. But as for the body, it will serve an eternal purpose. It's not fair to compare; it's apples & oranges, 2 totally different things. You're comparing something perishable w/something eternal... God has 2 totally different plans w/regard to these 2 things.

Yes, your stomach for food, food for your stomach... But the body for *union w/the Lord* & the Lord for *union w/the body*. Remember Jn 15? Jesus spoke of *abiding in Him*. In Ch 17 as He was praying & speaking of the union that He has w/the Father He said, ***"And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: In them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me."***⁸ As a believer, Jesus literally lives in you by the power of His Spirit. Your body is for union, intimacy w/Jesus, not a prostitute... do you see where this is going?

The purpose your body serves goes beyond the perishable into the eternal. Our bodies are for the purpose & pleasure of Jesus, not the purpose/pleasure of sin. That's why Paul wrote in Rom 12, ***"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your **bodies** a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."***⁹ There is a relationship that exists between our bodies & J.C. He has redeemed our bodies, therefore we're to serve Him w/our bodies.

Vs 15-17

Let me make this as plan as I possibly can. Christ is *in* you by the power of His Spirit. Therefore when you (or I) take part in some sort of sinful activity... it's not like Jesus is waiting outside while we do what we do & then when we're done He reconnects w/us. We drag Him (in a very real sense) into that situation.

Paul says, "Your bodies are members of Christ." So when we sin against the body, we sin against Christ. & As it pertains to sexual sin, it's different than any other sin... How so? Because there's a oneness physically & a dynamic spiritually that takes place. It's simply something that God has ordained as our Creator. **So when you're together w/your wife (or if you're a lady, your husband), there's a union that takes place that God has blessed. But anyone other than your spouse... you "become one" w/that person in a way that is actually cursed, it invokes the ramifications of sin.**

⁸ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Jn 17:22-23). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ro 12:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But Paul paints a vivid picture here. “Christ is *in* you, you are one w/Christ! Would you then take the members of Christ & join them, make them members of a harlot?” God forbid! Yet, that’s exactly what happens (though one may not be a vocational prostitute, still the principle is in play) when 2 people have sex outside of marriage. Because, “he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit w/Him.”

Vs 18

You see? There it is... There’s no getting around it. There’s a oneness physically & a dynamic spiritually that takes place w/sexual sin that sets it apart from other sins... Now, that’s not to say that one sin is lesser or greater than another w/in the context of “sin is sin”. However, the ramifications of sin may vary. (You go 43 mph in a 35 zone, you may get a fine. You murder someone, you’re going to prison. You broke the law in each case, but the ramifications are going vary radically based upon the severity.)

But underline those 1st 3 words of Vs 18. “Flee sexual immorality.” He doesn’t say, “See how strong you can be.” He doesn’t say, “Try to resist as long as you can.” He says, “Run!” “Get out!” “Flee!” How many people fall because they underestimate the power of lustful passion. They try to dance on the edge of unacceptable to their own demise!

& Allow me to remind you that this word for “sexual immorality” is the word “porneia” or “pornography”. It goes beyond the obvious (sexual intercourse w/someone you’re not married to). It includes pornographic videos, images, books, websites... you get the idea.

Now I should say, the bible doesn’t say that we should flee from sex. It’s a God given gift. If you’re married, no need to flee... feel free! 😊 Moms, dads, make sure your children are *terrified* to come in your bedroom w/out knocking if the door is closed... 😊 Now; your ministry may not be Pentecostal, but make sure your marriage is! (You know... lots of tongues & the laying on of hands 😊).

Sexual *immorality* however, is something altogether different. Flee. As Paul told Timothy, “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”¹⁰ I might add that “youthful lusts” don’t belong only to the young... flee. We’re reminded of Joseph (Gen 39), when Potiphar’s wife grabbed his garment & said, “Lie w/me!” & He literally ran out of the house & she was left holding his garment... He said, “How can I do this great wickedness & sin against God?” He didn’t fight it, he fled from it.

¹⁰ *The New King James Version*, (1982). [2 Ti 2:22]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Let me add this as well. The time to purpose in your heart what you're going to do isn't when you're in the middle of a situation. Figure it out right now, so that should the temptation ever visit you, you've already got a plan. Often times if you wait... it's too late. Figure it out right here, right now.

Vs 19-20

Ladies and Gentlemen: this is the bottom line. When Jesus redeemed you, He redeemed *all of you*. Not just your spirit, but your *body* & your spirit. You won't be a disembodied spirit forever. God will raise your body (because He's redeemed your body) & Paul will touch on that topic in Ch 15.

But your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, whom you have from God. Think about how mind blowing this is... God lives *in you*. He will never leave nor forsake you, He's always w/you & in you by His Holy Spirit.

& Here's the truth we need to let sink in... "& you are not your own." Here's why you can't really just "do what you want". Because you (both your body & your spirit) belong to God. He *bought you* from the slave market of sin, you're His. Therefore you & me... We are to use our bodies (which *belong* to Him) to *glorify* Him. –

Family, it's true that salvation is free, but it's anything but cheap. It cost God dearly... you were bought at a price. You were redeemed, not w/corruptible things (like silver or gold)... but w/the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb w/out spot or blemish. –

& I think this is a real key to leading a life of victory, to realize that our bodies are not our own. Your body belongs to J.C. it's not yours to do w/as you please. Have you every borrowed someone's car? (Not a rental, someone's vehicle). When you're making your way around in something that belongs to someone else, the tendency is to take better care of it than you would if it were your own. (Especially if it's a costly vehicle). I don't have the right to abuse or pollute someone else's property (nor do I want to). Follow me here, the "vehicle" that you're making your way around in everyday belongs to God, it was incredibly costly, Jesus paid a *great* price for it. Take care of it. We'd do well to begin each day by seeking to conscientiously surrender our body to Christ. What kind of difference would that make in what we do w/our body (our eyes, our ears, our mouths) throughout the day? **[Close]**

Glorify God w/your body & your spirit which are His. Charles Spurgeon said this, **"Your body was a willing horse when it was in the service of the devil, let it not be a sluggish hack now that it draws the chariot of Christ." (Spurgeon)**

Serve the Lord, glorify God in your body. You're a new creation in Christ, lay hold of that for which God has laid hold of you. As believers our mindset should never be on our "rights" but on our "debts". We owe J.C. more than we could ever repay. – Therefore serve Him w/all your heart, w/all your soul, w/all your strength & w/all your mind... & Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, & God will be glorified in your life.

Prayer Points:

Father may we recognize the "limit of liberty". Or maybe more accurately, may we walk in liberty & repent of rationalization, justification of license... That we embrace freedom *from* sin, & reject the notion of being free *to* sin. May we honor You w/all that we are. Transform us by the renewing of our minds that You might be glorified both in our body & in our spirit which are Yours.

Perhaps you've come here today & you *don't* belong to the Lord. God loves you. He wants to free you from the power/penalty of sin. Freedom is found in J.C. who has loved you & given Himself for you upon the cross. Believe *on* Him, call *upon* Him today, for whoever calls upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved. For w/the heart one believes unto righteousness & w/the mouth confession is made unto salvation (the mouth makes manifest what's found in the heart).