

Can I Live Anyway I Choose?

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Dr. Steve Hereford, Pastor-Teacher

INTRODUCTION

1. I spent this last week at youth camp with Forest Christian Church.
2. Our theme for the week was “Practical Holiness” from Romans 6:2 which says, “How can we who died to sin still live in it?” (ESV).
3. This question that Paul raises is in response to the doctrine of justification.
4. Paul’s critics argued that if we’re saved by grace apart from the Law then we would live any way we want without any restraint.
5. But Paul responds by stating if you have been saved, you will live a holy life.
6. That does not mean you will never again have any problem with sin.
7. Though the Scripture is clear in **Galatians 5:16 (NASB)** to say if we “walk by the Spirit,...(we) will not carry out the desire of the flesh.”
8. Or that it is “by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body” (Romans 8:13).

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9. The only way you can restrain sin and live a holy life is through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
10. All effort to be holy is in vain if it is carried out apart from the Spirit.
11. As we consider the subject of holiness this morning, I want to share a little a summary of what I shared in 4 messages.
12. We talked about 4 issues: worldliness, sexual immorality, the tongue, and attitudes.
13. I want to look at these 4 issues.
14. Two this morning and two next Lord's Day.
15. I want to begin by addressing the first issue and as we do that I want to remind you that when Paul says in Philippians 2:12 to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling," this is what he means.
16. You are to "pursue righteousness" and "hate all evil."
17. In 1 John 2:15-17, the apostle John confronts a problem that was occurring among his readers—they were loving the world.
18. And he calls for this action to "stop!" because it was inconsistent with their calling to salvation.

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19. He says in **1 John 2:15-17 (NASB)** Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. ¹⁷ The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

20. The question we are asking this morning is “Can I live anyway I choose?”

21. John gives us our first answer by stating very emphatically by stating *you are to hate the world not love it.*

I. You Are to Hate the World Not Love It (vv.15-17)

A. Loving the World is Prohibited By God (v.15)

1. This is reflected in the word “love”
2. John uses it in the imperative
3. We are not to be “conformed to this world”
(Rom.12:2)
4. We are to have the attitude that Paul had when he said in **Galatians 6:14 (NASB)** that “the world [had] been crucified to [him], and [he] to the world.”
5. The “world” is a reference to the evil system of which Satan is head
 - a) 2 Corinthians 4:4 refers to him as “the god of this world.”
 - b) **Ephesians 2:1-2 (NASB)** states that we used to conduct our lives “according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.”

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E.M. Bounds says the evil system “involves worldly affairs, earthly things, riches, pleasures, and pursuits which are shallow, frail, and fleeting. They stir desire, draw away from God, and are obstacles to the cause of Christ...The world is the sensuous harlot with her snares of death and hell.”¹

6. When you express affection and devotion to the world, you are guilty of loving it and this was their current action

John says they were already guilty of this when he uses the word “love.”

This word occurs in the present imperative which in Greek speaks of the act of forbidding the continuance of an action already going on.

7. The Scripture teaches that we are to hate the evil system not love it
 - a) **Psalms 97:10 (NASB)** Hate evil, you who love the Lord, Who preserves the souls of His godly ones; He delivers them from the hand of the wicked.
 - b) **Romans 12:9 (NASB)** *Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is*

¹ E.M. Bounds, *Winning the Invisible War*, 63.

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good.

B. Loving the World Reveals a Spiritual Problem (vv.15b-17)

John says...

1. If you love the world the love of the Father is not in you (v.15b)

This means “you’re not a Christian!”

Phileo said, “It is impossible for love to this world to co-exist with love to God, as it is impossible for light and darkness to co-exist.”

In other words, you cannot love the world and God.

Two things cannot have your complete devotion. God will not compete with anyone or anything.

- a) **Matthew 6:24 (NASB)** "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.
- b) **James 4:4 (NASB)** You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is

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hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

- c) Paul said in **2 Timothy 4:10 (NASB)** for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.

2. If you love the world your life will be characterized by the things of the world (v.16)

- a) The “lust of the flesh” (v.16a)

“lust” (epithumia) refers to a strong desire. It could be either towards something good or evil (1 Tim.3:1; Eph.2:3)

“flesh” (sarx) refers to “the totally depraved nature”

Paul said in **Romans 7:18 (NASB)** For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not.

The “lust of the flesh” is referring to that strong passionate desire or craving that comes from the evil nature.

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Jesus said in **Matthew 15:11 (NASB)** "*It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man.*"

Then in **Mark 7:21-23 (NASB)** He says "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, ²² deeds of coveting *and* wickedness, *as well as* deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride *and* foolishness. ²³ "All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

Next he says...

b) The "lust of the eyes" (v.16b)

"lust" is the same word used referring to the flesh.

The "eyes" (ophthalous) refers to the "channel into the mind and heart."² It is the "instrument of evil desire."

Note the examples the Scripture gives of this:

² George Berry, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, 73.

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- 1) Eve – **Genesis 3:6 (NASB)** When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

- 2) Achan – **Joshua 7:21 (NASB)** when I saw among the spoil a beautiful mantle from Shinar and two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold fifty shekels in weight, then I coveted them and took them; and behold, they are concealed in the earth inside my tent with the silver underneath it."

- 3) David – **2 Samuel 11:2-4 (NASB)** Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance. ³ So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" ⁴ David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her; and when she had purified herself from

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her uncleanness, she returned to her house.

The third characteristic of the world is...

c) The “boastful pride of life” (v.16c)

This refers to “an unholy ambition for self-display and self-glory” (MacDonald).

C. Loving the World Has Its Own Peril (v.17)

“The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.”

There are two contrasting statements in this verse.

The first says...

1. If you love the world you give evidence of where you're going

The second says...

2. If you do the will of God you'll live forever

According to this passage the will of God is for you to set your affections and devotion on Jesus Christ and not on the passing pleasures of sin.

Colossians 3:1-2 (NASB) ^{Col 3:1 (NASB)} Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the

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things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.

Warren Wiersbe says, “John is contrasting two ways of life: a life lived for eternity and a life lived for time. A worldly person lives for the pleasures of the flesh, but a dedicated Christian lives for the joys of the Spirit. A worldly believer lives for what he can see, the lust of the eyes; but a spiritual believer lives for the unseen realities of God (2 Cor. 4:8–18). A worldly minded person lives for the pride of life, the vainglory that appeals to men; but a Christian who does the will of God lives for God’s approval. And he “abideth forever.”³

So “Can we live anyway we choose?”

Not only are you to hate the world rather than love it but...

II. You Are to Flee Sexual Immorality (1 Corinthians 6:12-20)

There are three things sexual sin does: It *harms*, *controls*, and *perverts*.

³Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996, c1989). 1 Jn 2:17.

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A. Sexual Sin Harms (v.12a)

Paul says, “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not profitable.”

In other words...

1. No sin is ever right or good

The particular sin Paul had in mind here is sexual sin.

The Corinthians had a saying in verse 12 that basically meant they could do whatever they wanted to do. They were at complete liberty.

They would say, “All things are lawful.”

“All things” could mean “many things” or “things in general” or “there is nothing in itself that is unlawful.”

“Lawful” (exesti) meant “permissible, possible or allowed”

Paul uses their phrase but adds that “all things are not profitable.”

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Not all things are “beneficial” Some things are “harmful” in of themselves.

We should ask, “Are all things truly permissible?”

Romans 6:1-2 (NASB) ^{Ro 6:1 (NASB)} What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? ² May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

Romans 14:21 (NASB) It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or *to do anything* by which your brother stumbles.

All things are not lawful if they cause “your brother to stumble” or in the case of Romans 6:1-2 is “sin.”

We are not to “use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh.”

According to verses 13-17 they were using one another, gratifying the flesh.

They were literally joining their bodies which are “members of Christ” to “a harlot” and therefore taking their union with Christ into that immoral relationship.

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2. God looks at sexual immorality with extreme seriousness

Because of this sin in Israel, “twenty-three thousand fell in one day” (1 Cor.10:8).

When David committed adultery with Bathsheba and she became pregnant. He sought to cover it up. When that failed he had Uriah her husband murdered so that he could have Bathsheba as his wife.

Because of this, David paid for those sins almost every day of his life.

Several of his sons were rebellious, jealous, and vengeful, and his family was for the most part a tragic shambles.

2 Sam.12:13 says, “The Lord also has taken away your sin” but the Lord did not take away the consequences.

God’s grace is free but the cost of sin is high!

Not only does sexual sin harm but...

B. Sexual Sin Controls (v.12b)

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Paul says, “All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.”

1. Paul was free to do as he pleased but he refused to allow himself to be mastered by anything or anyone but Christ

He would not become enslaved to any habit or custom and certainly not to sin.

No sin is more enslaving than sexual sin. The more it is indulged, the more it controls the indulger.

2. Sexual sin is the consequence of unbridled lust

It always wants more.

The payoff for lust is more lust. “Even when you indulge in every kind of impurity, you’re still filled with a continual lust. You won’t be able to fantasize enough to quench lust. You won’t be able to sleep with enough people. You won’t be able to view enough pornography. You can gorge yourself on lust, but you’re always going to be hungry.”⁴

⁴ Joshua Harris, Not Even a Hint, 41.

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Next Paul says...

C. Sexual Sin Perverts (vv.13-20)

It not only harms and controls but it perverts.

A Christian's body is for the Lord—it is a member of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Because the Corinthians believed they could live anyway they wanted, they looked at sex as being purely biological but Paul said “the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body” (v.13).

Our bodies are members of Christ (vv.15-18) and when we engage in sexual immorality we are making the members of Christ the members of a harlot (v.15).

Because sex involves a union, when you are joined in sex outside of marriage, you are becoming one body with her or him.

So Paul says to “flee immorality” (v.18).

He uses the present tense here to indicate the fleeing is continual—you keep fleeing until the danger is past.

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Paul told Timothy in **2 Timothy 2:22 (NASB)** Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love *and* peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

Peter said in **1 Peter 2:11 (NASB)** Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

The body is a temple of the Holy Spirit (vv.19-20) and it is to be used as such.

We are not our own but are a holy habitation for the Lord.

Paul calls for sexual purity not only because of the way sexual sin affects the body, but because the body it affects is not even the believer's own.

“For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body” (v.20).

With this said, “Can we live the way we choose?”

You are to hate the world and flee sexual immorality.

We will cover the next two next time.

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CONCLUSION

1. We have said a lot this morning and have learned that we cannot live any way we choose.
2. As believers, we are held to the standard of God's righteousness and bound to His grace to live according to it.
3. We are not to be conformed to this world but are to seek His righteousness and set our affections on things above.
4. Therefore we are not at liberty to live any way we please.
5. To do so, raises the question of whether we have genuinely been changed or not.
6. Are you living a holy life or are you conforming to this world?
7. Is your life different today because of Christ or is it the same?
8. Are you longing for the things of the world, if so, the love of the Father is not in you and you're not saved.
9. Repent and turn to Jesus now as we pray.