



CHARIS-MATTERS

STUDIES IN FIRST CORINTHIANS

Text

First Corinthians 6:12-20

Topic

The apostle Paul answers the lies the world was telling that were persuading the believers at Corinth to indulge their physical appetites and thereby allow their bodies to become enslaved once again to sin

Title

“The Persuasion of the Body Snatchers”

Introduction

Buzz Lightyear didn't realize what he really was. He believed he was a space ranger for Star Command stationed at the Gamma Quadrant, Section Four, on a mission to stop the evil Emperor Zurg, sworn enemy of the Galactic Alliance.

It was quite a shock when he finally came to the realization that Woody was telling him the truth when he said, *“You are a TOY!”*

Christians often don't realize what they really are. We believe we're free because at the Cross Jesus Christ set us free from slavery to sin. It can therefore be quite a shock to read in the Bible (in Romans 6:16),

Romans 6:16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?

First Corinthians 6:12-20

“The Persuasion of the Body Snatchers”

It's as if the Bible were shouting at us, "*You are a SLAVE!*" Each of us yields or gives ourselves to someone or something. We are all slaves of someone or something. Our freedom is the freedom to choose who or what will be our master - "sin leading to death, or obedience leading to righteousness."

Since we want the Lord to be our Master we can ask these two questions: #1 Are You Allowing The World To Stimulate Your Physical Appetites With Its Lies?, or #2 Are You Seeking The Lord To Stimulate Your Spiritual Appetite With His Life?

#1 Are You Allowing The World
To Stimulate Your Physical Appetites With Its Lies?
(v12-18)

If you talked to a believer at Corinth you'd eventually hear three arguments they were using to justify certain behaviors:

1. In verse twelve you read, "all things are lawful for me..." In other words, I've been set free from rules and regulations.
2. In verse thirteen you read, "foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods..." In other words, my physical appetites were given to me by God to enjoy and there is nothing wrong with satisfying them.
3. In verse eighteen you read, "every sin that a man does is outside the body..." In other words, since the 'real' me is spiritual, what I do with my physical body does not affect me spiritually.

Armed with that mindset, the believers at Corinth - mostly from a pagan background - justified all sort of sinful behaviors. Most notably they continued to visit the Temple of Aphrodite where they paid the Temple prostitutes for sex.

Paul explained where they were going wrong in their thinking and, therefore, in their behaving.

1 Corinthians 6:12 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

First Corinthians 6:12-20
"The Persuasion of the Body Snatchers"

“All things are lawful for me” was the main argument you’d hear from a Corinthian. Today Christians say, “I’ve got liberty.” Yes, you do; you are not under the Law. But there is a “but.” Two, in fact:

1. “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful.” The word so translated means *profitable* or *advantageous* or *to answer to the purpose*. I ought to ask myself if some behavior will profit my walk with the Lord, if it is advantageous to my testimony before other believers and nonbelievers, and if it answers to the purpose for which I was saved which is to glorify God.
2. “All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.” Too often what I might claim as a freedom in Christ begins to take hold of my life, dominate my life, and have power over my life.

“All things are lawful” is further qualified by the understanding that anything inherently sinful cannot be a liberty. In the case of the Corinthians, having sex with a prostitute was not a liberty by any stretch of the principle.

Liberty in Jesus Christ is a great thing. Enjoy it! Remember, however, that “*You are a SLAVE!*” Your freedom is to serve the Lord.

1 Corinthians 6:13 Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

“Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods” was a second argument. God made you with physical appetites and He has provided the means to satisfy those appetites.

True, but it doesn’t follow that we should always act to satisfy or indulge our appetites. “God will destroy both it [the stomach] and them [the foods].” In other words, our current appetites will soon be left behind as we are resurrected or raptured. Why spend so much time, effort, and energy satisfying things that are temporary? Why not focus on the future and thus on spiritual appetites? Why not seek first the kingdom of God?

As to the specific appetite that the Corinthians were claiming was their liberty to satisfy, Paul pointed out that “the body is not for sexual immorality.” Period. End of argument. Sexual behaviors outside of the biblically defined marriage relationship are sin.

Instead of saying something dumb like, “foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods,” the believers ought to have been saying, “the body is... for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.” If you get to the point where you prefer satisfying your physical appetites over your spiritual appetites, then you’re sounding dumb.

1 Corinthians 6:14 And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power.

The physical body is important to the Lord. He was raised-up in a real, physical body and so will you either be raised-up or raptured to have a real, physical body. Thus it stands to reason what you do with your body now is of some consequence.

1 Corinthians 6:15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not!

The metaphor of the church as Jesus Christ’s body on the earth is common in Paul’s writings. He pictured Jesus in Heaven but able to accomplish more than ever on the earth because instead of having just one body the Lord has millions of them. It’s what the Lord meant when He told us that after He went to Heaven we would do “greater works” than He had done (John 14:12).

If I as a Christian, and we as a church, are the body that Jesus is inhabiting by His Spirit, then if I have sex with a Temple priestess - and I say this with all carefulness - **it is like Jesus having sex with her!** “Certainly not!”

We sometimes suggest that if something is questionable you ask yourself if you’d be comfortable taking Jesus along with you. It might be better to ask if you would force Jesus to be partaking of it with you since you are His body on the earth.

First Corinthians 6:12-20
“The Persuasion of the Body Snatchers”

1 Corinthians 6:16 Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "THE TWO," He says, "SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH."

Paul drew from the Genesis account of the first marriage to give us some insight about sexual intimacy. God's original intent can be seen in the Garden of Eden. The biblical definition of marriage is one man, one woman for life. It is "two" becoming "one flesh."

Now I don't think he was talking about them having sex and thereby "becom[ing] one flesh." Having sex with someone doesn't mean you're married to them or that you ought to get married to them.

Paul was talking about marriage itself. You and your spouse become "one" spiritually and emotionally over time as you grow with one another in the Lord. Daily there is a deepening of the relationship. Sexual intimacy is an expression of that oneness on a physical level.

The argument, then, that having sex outside of marriage is only for satisfying a physical appetite and has no lasting impact on marriage is absurd. It is an insult on marriage as God intended it.

1 Corinthians 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.

Whether you are married or not, you are "joined to the Lord," you are "one spirit with Him," and thus where you are, He is. Whatever you are doing, He's there.

Again Paul placed the Lord in bed with you and the prostitute. Or in front of your TV, movie screen, or computer monitor filled with pornography.

1 Corinthians 6:18 Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.

The Corinthians had another argument. They said, "every sin that a man does is outside the body." They had convinced themselves that what they did to or with their physical bodies - even if it might be characterized by

some as “sin” - had no lasting effect on their spirit and thus could be a liberty in Jesus Christ.

Notice the sad progression in their thinking. By claiming “all things are lawful” without any qualifiers, they started to separate the physical from the spiritual. They started living carnally, for the flesh, thinking that “food is for the stomach, and the stomach for foods.” It led to this terrible idea that even if something for someone else might be “sin,” it had no lasting effect and might be a liberty they could enjoy.

Not true, Paul said. Sexual immorality is *always* sin and it is “against [your] own body.” They were seeking to gratify their own body, to satisfy their own appetites. Instead they were destroying their own bodies.

Do you find yourself defending your liberties? Do you find yourself flaunting your liberties? Are you involved in behaviors that just a few years ago you thought were sin or at least questionable?

If you answer “Yes” to any of those questions you may be becoming Corinthian in your thinking.

What should you do? “Flee” those behaviors and reverse the trend. But more than that, you should seek the Lord.

#2 Are You Seeking The Lord To Stimulate Your Spiritual Appetite With His Life?

(v19-20)

Your freedom in Jesus Christ should never be an excuse to lower your standards so you can be more like the world.

It is a freedom to live for the Lord and to be becoming more like Him.

1 Corinthians 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

We discussed the fact that your physical body is the body Jesus is inhabiting and using on the earth. His indwelling presence makes your body His “temple.” We “have” Him “from God” refers to God the Holy Spirit given to us when we’re saved as promised us by Jesus.

“You are not your own” is explained by verse twenty:

1 Corinthians 6:20 For you were bought at a price...

Here is the great Bible doctrine of redemption. Human beings are born into slavery to sin. On the Cross Jesus Christ gave His life and it serves as a payment to set whosoever will believe on Him free from sin.

Did Jesus pay that terrible price, shedding His blood and dying that death, so that I might be free to sin? Did He suffer on the Cross so that I might have liberty to live a carnal, marginal life?

Sometimes when referring to our freedoms as citizens of the United States we look at folks exercising their first amendment rights and argue that good men and women died precisely so that they could be free to express their contrary opinions.

We shouldn't think that way as Christians! Jesus didn't die so I could become enslaved again in sin. He died and rose from the dead so I could share His life. His Spirit living in me is His life and that life ought to stimulate me to pursue the satisfaction of spiritual appetites.

1 Corinthians 6:20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

There is really no other way of looking at life than to want to “glorify God in your body and in your spirit...”

- “In your body” means that wherever I am, whatever I’m doing, the Lord is there. He is never stained by my sin but I should be ashamed to be dragging Him in to my sin. Instead I have the opportunity to share and

show His life to others as I choose to “glorify” Him by using my physical body as if I believed it represented His actual presence on the earth.

- “Glorify God... in your spirit...” by acting and reacting spiritually. Whatever Jesus would do on earth if He were in my home or at my church or on my job, I can do because I have His Spirit living in me and because my spirit was quickened and made alive by Him when I was born-again.

My personal assessment of the Christian landscape in America is that we are slipping backwards. Behaviors which were once taboo are now moved into the category of liberties. The world is doing a pretty good job of desensitizing us and drawing us deeper-and-deeper into questionable behaviors in the name of Christian liberty.

None of us are free. But we can choose who we will serve. Let’s concentrate on life - on the Lord’s life within us. Let’s remember we were set free from sin in order to serve the Lord as His voluntary slaves.

“You are a SLAVE!”