

Iglesia de Carne

Studies in First Corinthians

Text

First Corinthians 6:12-20

Topic

Instead of justifying sex with prostitutes, Paul tells the believers in Corinth to “flee sexual immorality”

Title

“Flee, Fly, Go, Run...”

You’re Bought with the Blood of the Risen One”

“Right now, poised at the edge of the galaxy, Emperor Zurg has been secretly building a weapon with the destructive capacity to annihilate an entire planet. I alone have the information that reveals his only weakness. You, my friend, are responsible for delaying my rendezvous with Star Command.”

To which Woody responded, “*You... Are... A... **TOY!!!***”

Buzz Lightyear 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. He didn’t know he was a toy that belonged to Andy.

The believers in Corinth had something in common with Buzz. They didn’t “know,” not fully, Who they belonged to:

- In verse fifteen we read, “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?”
- In verse nineteen we read, “Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?”

Until now in this letter, the apostle Paul had been referring to the assembly of believers, corporately, as God's Temple on the earth. When we are not together, we remain God's Temple *individually* as each of us is indwelt by God the Holy Spirit.

It is from that amazing truth that Paul challenged them to take another look at their habit of having sex with prostitutes.

It's as if he were saying to them, "*You... Are... A... **TEMPLE!!!***"

I'll organize my comments around two questions: **#1 Do You Believe Your Body Is Owner-Occupied?**, and **#2 Do You Behave Knowing Your Body Is Owner-Occupied?**

#1 - Do You Believe Your Body Is Owner-Occupied? (v19-20)

We're going to see that the believers in Corinth were, as Paul put it, "joined to... harlot[s]" (v16). I'm going to assume that all of us here agree that sex with prostitutes is sexually immoral.

The believers in Corinth thought visiting prostitutes was an area of Christian liberty. They offered arguments to defend their behavior. Paul counters their particular arguments in verses twelve through eighteen. I want to begin with verses nineteen and twenty. Absorb what they teach and you'll never need a talking-to like the believers in Corinth received.

1Co 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?

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

I want to look at each phrase in more or less the chronological order they would be in from our earthly perspective. First of all, we were "bought at a price." It invokes thoughts of the slave market. We are to think of the human race, in our natural state, as slaves to sin and Satan.

Before Disney became politically correct, in their classic ride, Pirates of the Caribbean, at the slave auction, the pirates would exclaim, "We wants the redhead!"

She's no longer for sale. The 'new' redhead, uncreatively named Redd, is now a strong female character.

(As if the entire ride isn't politically incorrect).

Slaves have a purchase price. Our purchase price was the coming of God in human flesh in order to die on the Cross. We are purchased out from sin and Satan by the blood of Jesus Christ:

- Being lifted-up on the Cross, Jesus said He would draw all men to himself. His sacrifice on the Cross is therefore sufficient to save *any* and *all*.
- We also know that He is the Savior of the world - especially those who believe. His death on the Cross is effective to save *any* and *all* **who believe**.

When you are saved, the Holy Spirit is "in you, whom you have from God." The Holy Spirit is a gift to every believer in Jesus Christ. Among other things, He is the guarantee of our future glorification.

He doesn't come and go. He takes up permanent residence in you. That is what I mean by "owner-occupied."

Your physical body becomes the earthly "temple of the Holy Spirit Who is in you." There is a famous, and very effective, tract called, "Christ's Heart, My Home." The thing is, a Temple suggests a lot more than a home. It suggests worship; rest; contemplation; study; sacrifice; prayer; separation. It is expected to be holy.

"You are not your own." You were bought for the purchase price, indwelt by the Spirit residing in you, in order to be enabled to perform God's will as His submissive slave.

In his 'Freedom Speech' in *The Avengers*, Loki tells a terrified crowd, "Is not this simpler? Is this not your natural state? It's the unspoken truth of humanity, that you crave subjugation. The bright lure of freedom diminishes your life's joy in a mad scramble for power, for identity. You were made to be ruled. In the end, you will always kneel."

It's worded a little differently by Paul in Philippians 2:10-11.

He wrote, "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

A blood-bought, Spirit-filled, submissive Temple slave, will *only, always*, want to “glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.”

When we look at verses twelve through eighteen, we’ll see that the believers in Corinth thought they could glorify God in their spirits no matter what they chose to do with their bodies. Not true; the body and the spirit need to be in synch.

You are God’s owner-occupied traveling Temple. He sets you up, so to speak, everywhere you go.

One of our worship choruses from the late 1980’s captured this:

*Lord prepare me, a sanctuary,
pure and holy, tried and true
And with thanksgiving, I'll be a living, sanctuary, for you*

I would only add that, by virtue of the indwelling Holy Spirit, you are ALREADY prepared as God’s sanctuary. We are to believe God, and be what we already are.

#2 - Do You Behave Knowing Your Body Is Owner-Occupied? (v12-18)

The believers in Corinth were the Temple of God. But because of their behavior, Paul saw them as a house of prostitution.

I’ll try to return to this, but let me get you thinking. You and I are the Temple of God; but what do others see us as? Am I a stadium? A mall? A golf course? A nightclub? A stadium? A gymnasium?

How about a café? Hold that in mind.

1Co 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.

1Co 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.

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 the rules and regulations of the Mosaic Law.”
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 so there is nothing wrong with satisfying them - including sex.”
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 in Corinth - mostly from an immoral pagan background - justified all sort of sinful behaviors. In these verses we learn that they continued to visit prostitutes for sex.

“All things are lawful for me” was the first argument you’d hear from a Corinthian. Today Christians say, “I’ve got liberty,” to justify questionable or even sinful behaviors. Yes, you do have liberty; 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 my so-called liberty 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.

1Co 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 fleshly 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 - sex - 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. How does the Bible define marriage? One biological male and one biological female - heterosexuals - in a monogamous marriage until death parts them.

"Now the body is... for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." This makes more sense since we started in verses nineteen and twenty. If my body is His Temple, then it is "for the Lord" to be used by Him as He sees fit to edify believers and to evangelize nonbelievers.

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

Jesus 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.

When we get to chapter fifteen, we'll see that the believers in Corinth were downplaying the resurrection of Jesus. It no longer mattered to them if He rose from the dead in a real body.

Except it does. If Jesus isn't risen in a real body, there is no Christianity; there is no salvation. Thankfully, "He is risen indeed!"

1Co 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 in Israel the Lord has millions of them around the globe. 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 am in the body that Jesus is inhabiting by His Spirit, and if I have sex with a prostitute - and I say this with all carefulness - **it is like Jesus having sex with her!** “Certainly not!” Paul rightfully exclaimed.

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 participating in it with you since you are Owner-occupied.

1Co 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. The goal of marriage is for the “two” committed partners to “become one flesh” over the course of their monogamous relationship. Now by “flesh” it doesn’t mean just the physical. The original marriage was two becoming one physically and spiritually.

Sexual intimacy was a component of this larger goal of two becoming one - a component designed to be enjoyed in marriage, not apart from it.

If you join your body with a prostitute, you are doing outside of marriage something reserved for inside of marriage.

Paul wasn’t being mystical. He was arguing that using your body to have sex with a prostitute was a significant misuse of it. It **does** matter what you do with your body.

BTW - Regardless the agenda our surrounding culture is bent on promoting, biblical marriage is the gold standard and everything outside it is sexual immorality. The California Legislature passed a resolution blaming religious leaders and groups that support sexual orientation change efforts therapies for the suicides and attempted suicides of those who identify as LGBT. In a party-line vote, the state Senate approved Assembly Concurrent Resolution 99, which demands that people of faith in the state change their approach to ministering to same-sex attracted men and women and others who identify as LGBT. We love people too much to follow a worldly agenda.

BTW #2 - Having sex with someone doesn't mean you must marry them, or that you are somehow married in God's eyes. Marriage may be recommended in some cases, but sex isn't marriage. Marriage is called, in a couple of places in the Bible, a "covenant of companionship."

The argument, then, that having sex outside of marriage is for satisfying a physical appetite God gave us is false. Sex is more than a physical appetite. It is part of the covenant of marriage as God intended it.

As an appetite, it is significantly different than eating. Nowhere does the Bible say eating is confined to marriage. And I might add, even with eating, there can be sin, e.g., gluttony.

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

Again, think of this in light of verses nineteen and twenty. As His Temple, you are "joined to the Lord," you are "one spirit with Him." A.W. Tozer tries to illustrate this by using a sword being forged in fire. The fire is one substance; so is the metal. In the forge, the fire joins with the metal; it becomes part of it.

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

1Co 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 was their liberty in Jesus Christ.

Notice the sad progression in their thinking:

1. By claiming "all things are lawful" without any qualifiers, they started to separate the physical from the spiritual.
2. They started living carnally, for the flesh, thinking that "food is for the stomach, and the stomach for foods."
3. 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.”

How so? In Christ, your purpose is to “glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's” (v20).

They were seeking to *gratify* their own body, and thereby they could not *glorify* God’s body.

Bottom line: “Flee sexual immorality.” “Flee” is a strong word. One commentator wrote:

“The Bible does not tell you to amble, meander, lope, or trot from your sin. It tells you to flee. Fleeing involves effort. It involves straining. It involves speed. You flee when you need to find and experience safety from a threat. You flee when it is too dangerous to remain where you are, when standing still would put you in mortal peril.”

George Knight points out that “Paul always uses ‘flee’ in relation to particular sins, not sins in general.” His concern, then, is to warn you about those sins that are especially attractive and deadly:

- Later in this letter we will read, “Therefore, my beloved, **flee** from **idolatry**” (10:14).
- In First Timothy 6:9-11 we read, “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For **the love of money** is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, **flee** these things...”

Materialism... Idolatry... Sexual immorality. They are Satan’s three-peat against believers throughout history.

Using the world he is god over, and with the help of principalities and powers and rulers of darkness, he entices our unredeemed humanity to pursue these rather than flee from them. They become *goals* rather than *gross*.

Earlier I suggested several buildings we might represent other than God’s Temple. It wasn’t meant as a rebuke; obviously you can go to any of them that are not blatantly immoral.

In fact, you should go to them. The idea is that you are God's moveable Temple set-up IN them.

How do you behave like God's Owner-occupied Temple in each place you find yourself? Good question... **To ask Jesus as we close.**