

I Corinthians 6:12-20  
Fifth Sunday after Epiphany  
February 7, 2010

## **1 Corinthians 6:12-20 (New International Version)**

### **Sexual Immorality**

<sup>12</sup>"Everything is permissible for me"—but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"—but I will not be mastered by anything. <sup>13</sup>"Food for the stomach and the stomach for food"—but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. <sup>14</sup>By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. <sup>15</sup>Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! <sup>16</sup>Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh."<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>17</sup>But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

<sup>18</sup>Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. <sup>19</sup>Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; <sup>20</sup>you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

### **OUR BODIES ARE THE LORD'S**

One of the big debates on both the political and social platforms of today is "choice." The matter of choice whether regarding abortion or matters of sex is hotly debated across our country. The most commonly held argument is "It is my body. I have the right and freedom to do what I want with it." But the Apostle Paul in this section of his first letter to the Corinthian congregation is addressing the concept of using our bodies in such a way that honors God...that glorifies Him. The truth is that **OUR BODIES ARE THE LORD'S: Bought by Christ and Lived in by the Holy Spirit.**

Sometimes in Scripture there are topics which cause more than a little discomfort. The second lesson for this particular Sunday of Epiphany is one such topic. This Scripture lesson is part of a series on Christian living which Paul wrote to the Christian congregation in Corinth, Greece. Why the squeamishness? Why the discomforts with a topic like this? For the answer to that we go back to the beginning.

Adam and Eve had disobeyed God by eating from the forbidden tree. The very first thing that happened as recorded in Scripture is that their

eyes were opened and they both saw that they were naked. The feebly attempted to cover their nakedness with fig leaves. Righteousness immediately turned to sin; Glory to disgrace, Beauty to shame. The beautiful body God had created by hand now became an object of shame. So far had mankind fallen from God that they were no longer able to view the beauty of God's creation, which was the human body with anything but perversion.

This particular attitude has never left the corrupt nature of sinful mankind. In fact, pagan culture and religion has incorporated perversion of the human body and God's gift of sex from the earliest of times. Greek culture was no different. Whereas God forbids sexual sins, the Greeks often celebrated them. The city of Corinth was a coastal, shipping city in the south of Greece. Sexual perversions were prevalent. The Christians in Corinth had become casual about such things. They used Christian freedom as an excuse to tolerate, if not participate in sexual sinful activity.

Paul set them straight regarding freedom. He wrote, <sup>12</sup> ***"Everything is permissible for me" but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"—but I will not be mastered by anything.*** <sup>13</sup> ***"Food for the stomach and the stomach for food"—but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.*** Christian freedom ends in matters where God speaks clearly. Some in Corinth insisted that Christ had freed them to commit certain sins.

The truth is, we are NOT free to exercise Christian freedom in such a way that will not benefit us or others or enslave us. Some in Corinth places sexual sins on an equal par with a common activity like eating. If the body craves food, feed it. If the body craves other things, feed that too. It is true that God gives us food to satisfy hunger and nourish the body. That gives glory to God. He did NOT create us to pervert our bodies in such a way that does NOT give him glory. His Word is clear: sexual immorality is a sin and does not express a relationship with him.

You want to know how serious God is about his eternal plan for our bodies? Paul continues: <sup>14</sup> ***By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.*** <sup>15</sup> ***Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never!*** <sup>16</sup> ***Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh."*** <sup>17</sup> ***But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.*** God is so serious about his eternal plan for our bodies that he demonstrated it through Christ. Things like the stomach and food will pass away. But God intends to transform us from our sinful

state on earth to glory in heaven. Sexual immorality does not conform to glorious immortality. Paul then countered with three questions. He structured the Greek in such a way as to require the answer "Yes." *"Yes. My body is a member of Christ himself. Yes. I know I shouldn't unite with a prostitute or any sexual form of immorality. Yes. I know that to unite myself with sexual immorality is to dishonor marriage."* Right about now, our sinful minds may counter with this apparent loophole: *"I have never been with a prostitute. I am in the clear!"* Wrong. Prostitution is just one example Paul cited here of sexual immorality. And in fact, Jesus said that sexual sins begin in the heart. Loophole eliminated. I am convicted.

By grace through faith God has called us – body and soul – into communion with Christ. God speaks clearly. The gift of sex is reserved for marriage as an expression of love and faithfulness between husband and wife. ***"The two will become one flesh."*** Do you see the point? We, the holy Christian Church are the bride of Christ. We express unity with him with activities and attitudes that glorify him...that express love for him.

Now Paul calls for action. ***18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. 19 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.*** The Greek word translated "flee" means to avoid as if you were invisible. It also implies a continual action. In other words dear Christian, continue to be invisible to all things sexual immoral and keep on doing it your whole life.

Maybe we think of Joseph in Egypt. When tempted by his master Potiphar's wife to commit sexual immorality, he didn't just say no. He ran! He fled! Martin Luther put it this way. He once said, "You can't keep the birds from flying overhead, but you can keep them from building nests in your hair." He was talking about temptation. Temptations will surely come our way. Satan will see to that. He knows sin separates us from God. Sin kills faith. But we have God's guarantee that we will never be tempted beyond which he has given us the power to resist and flee.

You and I have been empowered by the Holy Spirit to flee temptation. At our Baptism, God the Holy Spirit set us apart. The sexual sins that dwell within all our hearts are washed away clean. He brought us to faith in Christ and dedicated our bodies as his very own dwelling place – his temple. Think of it! Our bodies are the personal dwelling place of God – dedicated by God himself to giving him honor and glory. Just as we would never consider using our church building which we dedicated to the proclamation of the gospel and the faithful use of the

sacraments, we would never consider using our bodies for anything that gives anything but the best to God.

In fact, we shouldn't even think of our bodies as being ours in the first place. You and I are bought and paid for. Christ took on human flesh to save human flesh from sin and death. The cost to buy us back was dear. Jesus stooped to become one of us. He took on the damnation that each and every sin deserves on himself. We are God's possession. We are called not to serve ourselves or be mastered by that which corrupts and destroys. We are called to serve him.

And to him be the glory. Amen.