

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

I COR. 6:12 All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

13 Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.

14 And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.

15 Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make *them* the members of an harlot? God forbid.

16 What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

17 But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

NOTES

Members of Christ

Lesson Text: I Corinthians 6:12-20

Related Scriptures: I Corinthians 5:1-13; 6:1-11;
I Thessalonians 4:3-8; Colossians 3:1-11; Romans 6:1-14

TIME: A.D. 55

PLACE: from Ephesus

GOLDEN TEXT—“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (I Corinthians 6:19-20).

Lesson Exposition

OUR BODY FOR THE LORD— I Cor. 6:12-14

“All things are lawful” (I Cor. 6:12). “It is my body, and I can do with it whatever I choose!” This is a slogan that is shouted repeatedly in American society. Unfortunately, it is the rally cry of the rebel and is absolutely false, as we will see in this lesson.

The Corinthians also had slogans in their culture that they lived by until Paul challenged them. The first slogan Paul takes issue with was a popular saying among the Corinthians: “All things are lawful unto me.”

Paul responds by stating that while all things may be lawful, not all things are helpful. Just because we legally can do something does not mean that we should. The legality of an issue is not the only factor in determining whether it is right or wrong.

“Food for the stomach” (I Cor. 6:13-14). The next Corinthian slogan that Paul addresses is, “Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats.” This is how the Corinthians justified their intention to satisfy any and all

of their cravings.

Paul responds by writing that God will destroy both the stomach and food in the end. These things are not eternal, and we should not live for them. Bodily urges may be “natural,” but they are temporal and subject to God’s judgment. Acting on our cravings or impulses is a terrible way to live our lives and ties us to a trainload of unwelcome consequences. Instead, we should seek higher desires.

The apostle goes on to state that the body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord. Just because something feels natural or right does not excuse sinful activity.

We exist for God’s purposes, not our own. We owe our lives to God and are subject to Him because He has bought us with a price.

MEMBERS OF CHRIST— I Cor. 6:15-17

“Do you not know?” (I Cor. 6:15-16a). In the beginning of this letter, Paul alluded to the fact that the church is Christ’s body and should not be divid-

ed (1:13). Just as there should not be any division in the corporate assembly of believers through favoritism or preference, there should also be no division internally in the believer because of sin.

Getting saved is not simply coming to an agreement with certain doctrinal principles. It is more than saying a prayer, going to church, and participating in sacraments (baptism and communion). Becoming a Christian is to become a member of Christ, that is, to be united with Him in relationship and fellowship. We love Him, obey His teachings, and repent when we fail and fall short.

Twice in verses 15 and 16, Paul asks the Corinthians, "Know ye not?" This makes it clear that the Corinthians should have already known his teaching, but their practice implied a lack of understanding. They should have already understood the sinfulness of sexual immorality and indulging in immoral pleasures. However, they continued to justify their actions.

In response to his own question, Paul emphatically states, "God forbid!" This is the strongest denunciation he could have given. It was absolutely unthinkable that Christ, in His holiness, would ever participate in sexual activity with a prostitute, yet Paul indicates that the unthinkable is essentially what happens when a Christian commits sexual sin. Since a believer is a member of the body of Christ, he brings Christ into the unholy union.

The world does not see sexual deviancy as a big deal, but Paul vehemently argues otherwise. All sexual relations outside of biblical marriage—which is one man married to one woman for life—are sin. Premarital sex (fornication), extramarital sex (adultery), and homosexual sex are forbidden by God and are under His condemnation. This includes other perversions as well, such as pornography, bestiality, incest, polygamy, and bigamy. It is bad enough that the world engages in these practices, but to

find them practiced among believers is an abomination of the worst sort.

One flesh (I Cor. 6:16b-17). The intimate nature of a sexual relationship makes two people one flesh. In order to establish his point, Paul refers to God's creative order and takes the Corinthians back to the creation of human beings. It was there when God created male and female that He said the two shall become one flesh (Gen. 2:24).

This is not just Paul's opinion on this matter. He has often been mischaracterized and falsely accused in modern times of being a prude, a misogynist, and a homophobe who tried to foist his own agenda on other people. That is absurd, and Paul repeatedly shows that his theology is not rooted in his own opinion but rather in the Word of God that was established in the beginning.

The reference to the two being one flesh shows that sexual intimacy has a spiritual as well as a physical aspect. Sex is a beautiful union within biblically defined marriage, but it is destructive outside of marriage.

THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT—I Cor. 6:18-20

Flee from sexual immorality (I Cor. 6:18). The only way to avoid sexual sin is to flee from it. This is Paul's only instruction on the matter. Sexual temptation is so strong that the only way to deal with it is to remove yourself from the situation immediately. Otherwise, you are likely to be completely overtaken by desire, leading you to give in to the temptation (cf. Jas. 1:14-15).

Sexual sin is more damaging than other sins because of the ramifications. Disease, unwanted pregnancy, and a false sense of intimacy are just a few of the long-lasting, if not lifelong, problems that come with sexual sin. The list goes on almost endlessly of people and families who have been ruined by sexual sin and perversion.

It is in this respect that a person sins against his own body, as Paul states.

The apostle's warning to the Corinthian believers is to run away from sexual sin. At the first hint of temptation, get out of the situation that you are in. Do not stand around and fight it. Run away! Joseph is a stellar example of a man who fled when faced with sexual temptation. Joseph stalwartly resisted multiple advances, but as soon as he found himself facing them alone, he fled the scene (Gen. 39:7-12).

Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 6:19-20). Again, Paul asks the question, "Know ye not?" Again, what follows is something the Corinthian Christians should already have understood. There is nothing wrong with needing to be taught basic Christian doctrines, but there comes a time when we are expected to move beyond foundational issues and get into deeper teaching (cf. Heb. 5:11-14).

Paul informed the Corinthians that they were the temple of the Holy Spirit. Just as we learned in last week's lesson, the believer individually and the church corporately comprise the temple of the Holy Spirit. God no longer resides in a building made with human hands. Instead, He lives in every believer. The church is a gathered assembly of redeemed sinners, which means the Holy Spirit is in us all whether we are alone or gathered together.

We are not our own, because we have been bought with a price. Jesus shed His blood on Calvary's cross so that we can be free from sin. He gave His life as a ransom (Matt. 20:28) to redeem us from sin (cf. Eph. 1:7). Since Christ is both our Creator (cf. John 1:3; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16) and Redeemer, we belong to Him and will answer to Him for the way we live our lives. Therefore, our bodies should be used to glorify God, not to satisfy ourselves.

Whenever you are faced with the

opportunity or temptation to engage in any kind of questionable conduct, remember that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Sexual sin especially should never be permitted in His temple. Your morals and conduct should reflect who you belong to, giving no cause for shame or disgrace to His name. Instead, your aim should always be to bring Him glory and delight.

Our bodies do not exist for our own pleasure, and we are not to do just anything we want with them. We do not belong to ourselves, but to God. This should be seen as liberating because God will resurrect our bodies and give us eternal life.

—Robert Ferguson, Jr.

QUESTIONS

1. How did Paul respond to the claim that "all things are lawful"?
2. What was meant by the expression, "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats"?
3. How did Paul respond to this claim?
4. What did Paul mean when he said that we are members of Christ?
5. Why did Paul ask the Corinthians, "Know ye not"?
6. What picture did Paul use to demonstrate how reprehensible sexual sin was?
7. What is meant by "they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:24)?
8. How did Paul say we are to deal with sexual temptation?
9. Why is sexual sin so much more damaging than other sins?
10. Why can we not say that our bodies belong to ourselves?

—Robert Ferguson, Jr.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. God does not free us from the power of sin to have us brought under its power again (I Cor. 6:12).
2. God's people find ultimate fulfillment in pleasing Him (vs. 13).
3. The power that raised Christ from the dead is at work today to free believers from the bondage to sin (vss. 14-15).
4. Sexual immorality is acceptable in our culture, but it still offends God (vss. 16-17).
5. Sexual sin holds men and women in bondage; God desires that they be free (vs. 18)!
6. God has paid the price for believers to glorify Him with their bodies (vss. 19-20).

—Cheryl Y. Powell.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. What are some Scriptures that Christians often misapply, taking them out of context? Discuss.
2. Are sexual sins worse than other sins? Why or why not? Discuss.
3. Is it possible for a believer to maintain sexual purity in today's culture?
4. What are some similarities between the sexual attitudes and practices of the Corinthian culture of Paul's day and the culture in which we live today?
5. What does it mean that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?

—Cheryl Y. Powell.

Golden Text Illuminated

“What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's” (I Corinthians 6:19-20).

Many people believe that Christianity is opposed to sex, but scripturally literate believers know that sex is a good and precious gift from God.

Sexuality is good, but since God created us, He has the right to tell us how it should be used. Sadly, some in the Corinthian church were taking God's commands about sex lightly.

The city of Corinth was infamous as a center for sexual immorality. In fact, a word was coined (it is archaic now) specifically to designate those who indulge in debauchery—*corinthianize*.

Because they had been purchased with the blood of Christ, Paul urged the believers at Corinth to use their bodies for the glory of God. But Paul goes further—he reminds them that they are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Paul tells the Corinthians that the true temple, the one that God now indwells, is the body of the believer.

Paul never tells the Corinthians that their immoral behavior has removed their status as God's sanctuary. They are still the Holy Spirit's temple, but they have polluted it. They have grieved the Holy Spirit and quenched His fire (cf. Eph. 4:30; I Thess. 5:19). To become clean again, they must live according to their identity as people who have been washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (I Cor. 6:11).

—Mark Winter.