

## 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

<sup>12</sup>“All things are permitted for me”—but not all things are beneficial. “All things are permitted for me”—but I will not allow anything to control me. <sup>13</sup>“Foods are for the belly, and the belly is for foods, but God will do away with both of them.” However, the body is not for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. <sup>14</sup>God raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. <sup>15</sup>Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then remove the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Certainly not! <sup>16</sup>Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute is one body with her? For it says, “The two will become one flesh.” <sup>17</sup>But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him.

<sup>18</sup>Flee from sexual immorality! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. <sup>19</sup>Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, <sup>20</sup>for you were bought at a price. Therefore glorify God with your body.

## Controlled by God Alone

### I.

Morality. Christians look around at the world and get an eyeful and earful of what seem to be rampant changes in morality in our culture. It makes us fearful of what we will have to face as we grow older and over what future generations are going to face. It seems that morality is out of control. It seems worse than it has ever been.

This is not the first generation to have thought that. *Every* generation of believers is uncomfortable with societal rot and perhaps even believes things have never been this bad before. The Old Testament shows that moral issues were problematic to Israel throughout its history. The New Testament verifies that immorality still ran rampant.

Believers have to wonder sometimes: Is God in control?

On the other side of the coin is the desire of human nature to rationalize moral choices. Reprehensible is the idea that a human being is merely a marionette dancing on a string like the cosmic plaything of some mythical and mysterious Master of the Universe. At the same time, some things “just are” by nature. Water doesn’t flow uphill naturally. Certain facts of life simply must be accepted as things no one can do anything about.

Fatalism, I guess you could call it. “Foods are for the belly, and the belly is for foods” (1 Corinthians 6:13, EHV). Cosmic marionette or nature, whichever way you want to explain it, a person has to eat. There is no question about it.

Corinth was a cosmopolitan kind of place. Very forward-thinking. Very modern. Very progressive. Sexual appetites were considered to be just as natural as an appetite for food. It was unseemly to consider any sexual appetite as disturbing or sinful. Just as a person needed food for the belly, no sexual appetite could be challenged as wrong.

### II.

The United States is a very cosmopolitan kind of place. Very forward-thinking. Very modern. Very progressive. Much like Corinth of old, sexual appetites are to be considered just as natural as an appetite for food.

Pressure is everywhere to look at sexual appetites—nearly *any* sexual appetite—as being as natural as a need for food. Sexual sins dominate our society. A person might be deplatformed or depersoned for insisting that homosexuality is wrong. But God’s Word doesn’t just condemn homosexuality as sinful—any sexual activity outside marriage is sin. Extra marital affairs. Transgender sexuality. Living together without being married. Using

an app to hook up with someone you never met for a sexual encounter. Pornography. All the TV shows and movies that glorify and promote any of the sexual behaviors Scripture calls wrong. There are plenty of others, to be sure.

Living in a society that glorifies sex so much poses a challenge to someone who has learned some things about Christianity.

“All things are permitted for me” (1 Corinthians 6:12, EHV). Christian freedom is a beautiful thing. For the Christian bombarded with a culture that glorifies human sexuality of any and every type the slogan seems to be just the ticket. It doesn’t sound as crass as “food for the belly and the belly for food.” I can be enlightened and make choices. I’m not a marionette. I have freedom.

Adiaphora is a term Christians like to bandy about. Adiaphora are things neither commanded nor forbidden by God.

Perhaps you can relate to the Christians in Corinth. Society glorified sexual choices. Everything was open. Everything was fine. A person’s sexual choices simply could not be criticized. The Christians in Corinth chose the slogan of their area “All things are permitted for me” and adopted it to the concept of Adiaphora, Christian freedom.

Theirs was an enlightened society; they could make additional sexual choices based on Christian freedom. What God had said about sexual conduct in the Old Testament didn’t really apply to enlightened society. Those commands had been for a different time and place.

It certainly seems like a lesson was in order about which things are Christian freedom and which are not. Paul would get to that, but he chooses to start by talking about some restrictions to Christian freedom first. “All things are permitted for me’—but not all things are beneficial. ‘All things are permitted for me’—but I will not allow anything to control me” (1 Corinthians 6:12, EHV). Adiaphora—Christian freedom—must not be harmful, especially spiritually. Also, adiaphora must not control the Christian. In other words, one shouldn’t become addicted to the thing neither commanded nor forbidden.

Just like the society in Corinth, modern, progressive, enlightened culture seems to think that Christian freedom includes sexual freedom. Some Christians like to point to the Ceremonial Laws governing Israel’s worship, like animal sacrifice and restrictions about which foods to eat and things that might designate a person as “unclean.” Since *those* rules don’t apply, modern, progressive, enlightened Christians of today can consider all those “rules” about human sexuality as quaint commands specifically for God’s Old Testament people—not something that still applies today.

Paul says otherwise. “However, the body is not for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body” (1 Corinthians 6:13, EHV). Whether it is prostitution or homosexuality or premarital sex or watching sex online or on tv, Paul calls it sexual immorality, not an enlightened, progressive, modern attitude.

“Flee from sexual immorality! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body” (1 Corinthians 6:18, EHV). It isn’t just sexual sins that Paul condemns, but all sin. Sexual sins, however, were always considered especially shameful by God. There were severe penalties for them in the Old Testament.

### III.

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is within you,

whom you have from God? You are not your own, <sup>20</sup>for you were bought at a price” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20, EHV).

Sexual sins certainly cover a wide range. Besides the obvious of pre-marital, extra-marital, homosexual, prostitution, and pornography, there are all the peripheral sins. There are broken homes and fights and squabbles that surround the marriage relationship.

Jesus came into the world to deal with sin. All sin.

Sexual sins have dominated the human existence, which perhaps is why they get mentioned so frequently in the Bible. They serve as an example to us of believers who got snared by them in the past and as a reminder to us in the present to fight against them.

Abraham had some sexual sins. So did Jacob. So did David. Yet these individuals were not irredeemable because of their sexual sins. They are held up, even in New Testament commentary in the book of Hebrews, as faithful examples of believers through the centuries.

Jesus came into the world to do things we could not do. He came to overcome the frailty of the sinful nature of Abraham and Jacob and David—and us. He came to win for us the right for us to be his own.

You are not your own. You were bought at a price. Paul says to the Ephesians: “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup>to make her holy, by cleansing her with the washing of water in connection with the Word. <sup>27</sup>He did this so that he could present her to himself as a glorious church, having no stain or wrinkle or any such thing, but so that she would be holy and blameless” (Ephesians 5:25-27, EHV). You know the price Jesus paid for you—his suffering and death on the cross. He did this because he loves you.

#### IV.

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, <sup>20</sup>for you were bought at a price. Therefore glorify God with your body” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20, EHV).

The Holy Spirit has worked faith in your heart. How he lives inside you. Your body is a temple. Your body has become a significant part of your spiritual worship of God.

In fact, Paul says: “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then remove the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Certainly not! <sup>16</sup>Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute is one body with her? For it says, ‘The two will become one flesh.’ <sup>17</sup>But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him” (1 Corinthians 6:15-17, EHV).

Part of worship is remembering to treat your body like the church. Church buildings are nice. We enjoy having a space in which to gather for worship. But the *real* dwelling place of God is inside the hearts of his believers.

God paid a high price for you—his Church. In faithful thanksgiving to God, control your use of your body as part of your spiritual act of worship.

You are not controlled by the appetites of the sinful nature, like some animal who seems incapable of disregarding its instincts, no matter how destructive. You are controlled by God alone. But that doesn’t mean you are a marionette dancing on a string as God’s cosmic plaything.

While society rushes back and forth in condemnation and acceptance of things God calls destructive, you hold fast to what he says is best. After all, because he bought and paid for you and your salvation, you want to be controlled by God alone. Amen.