

We are in the middle of Apostle Paul's corrective instruction for the church in Corinth. They thought they were spiritual giants, but there were so many ways in which their behavior did not line up with the message of the gospel. Paul had already addressed the specific situation of sexual immorality that the church had not dealt with, but now he addresses sexual immorality in general. Since the city of Corinth had a temple with 1000 prostitutes, the temptation to compromise was quite strong.

When we had a full-size reproduction of the tabernacle and took people through explaining the details and how it foreshadowed Christ, I would talk about original sin. It was surprising to me how many people thought Christians viewed original sin as sex or that sex was somehow worse than any sin. I realized that the either church at large or the culture had given the wrong impression of what the Bible says about sex. Adam and Eve were told in the Garden of Eden to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:28ⁱ). Sex is a gift from God when it is in the confines of marriage. But sexual immorality is a sin like any other sin, except that it affects our very body and soul, as we see in this passage. The problem for Christians is that this sin betrays the picture of our relationship with Christ. For those who are married, adultery pictures unfaithfulness to Christ. For those who are single, fornication pictures a careless disregard for our commitment to Christ and ignoring the fact that the other person is made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27ⁱⁱ). For the Christian there is no such thing as casual sex. It is a beautiful image of our commitment to one another, a sharing of our very souls.

¹² *“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything.* 1 Corinthians 6:12 This maxim of “All things are lawful for me” was probably derived from a teaching of Paul regarding Jewish laws. Since Jesus kept the law for us, the laws add nothing to our salvation (Romans 8:2-4ⁱⁱⁱ). We are free to be led by the Spirit (Galatians 5:16^{iv}). Being freed from the law, a believer in Jesus can do anything, nevertheless, as believers we will avoid evil and obey the leading of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 19:23^v). Later in this letter Paul tells us not to do anything that will stumble a brother (1 Corinthians 8:13^{vi}). We are under the one law of love (John 15:12^{vii}). **Augustine's maxim was, “Love and do what thou wilt.”** Paul wrote that love fulfills the law (Romans 13:10^{viii}). This love is of course the biblical love, agape, that expects nothing in return. It is not gratifying our passions but is rather a demonstration of the love of Christ.

Paul clarifies how this should be applied by adding, “but I will not be dominated by anything” Is it God's will? Will it dominate you and thereby put you back in slavery to sin or cause you to neglect the Great Command to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:29,30^{ix})? Our freedom is to walk in the Spirit instead of the flesh (Galatians 5:16^x). The world can't do that because they are in bondage to the flesh. So, when we say we are free from the civil and worship laws of Moses, it is freedom to walk with God and do His will rather than our own will. We are freed from the bondage of sin over our lives.

¹³ *“Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food”—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.* 1 Corinthians 6:13 Paul gives an example of something

that can dominate us, something we all experience. Food can become a god to us. I just recently heard a couple declare they are foodies. They decide where they want to live not by the church that they could be a part of but by where there are restaurants with the food they love. Food is their focus. The stomach and food are temporal. How short-sighted to fix our desires there? It's like settling for an ant hill when Everest lies before us.

The Corinthians would say the body was made for sex and sex for the body. But God did not create our bodies to be given over to sexual immorality. He created the body for Himself. Certainly, there is pleasure in intimacy within the boundary of marriage but take it outside God's boundary and it wreaks havoc on your soul, enslaving you to destructive, habitual thinking and behavior. Survey after survey tells us that **the most sexually satisfied people are those in a lifelong monogamous relationship.** That exposes Satan's lie for what it is, a path to self-destruction.

A few years ago, I was clinging to the bell tower cross as I put Christmas lights on it. I thought to myself, "If I don't hold tight to this cross, I could fall and it's a long way down!" Yes sir! If sexual temptation is your weakness, you better tightly cling to the cross, for if you fall, it is a long way down. I see too many cases where sexual desire has destroyed families, relationships, and churches. Paul brings up food and sex as these can be two of Satan's most effective tools to make us ineffective for God's kingdom. If he can re-enslave us to sin, we won't be freeing others from its enslaving grip.

¹⁴ And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. 1 Corinthians 6:14 While we should care for our bodies as the temple of the Holy Spirit and as a vessel for His use, to live for the body is short-sighted. God will raise these bodies even after they have returned to the elements. That is how He made man in the first place. People ask me about cremation. If our physical bodies are raised and transformed, shouldn't we avoid cremation? If God made us from the dust, it is no problem for Him to reassemble our dust. "Each of us consists of enough potassium for one shot from a toy cannon, enough fat for six bars of soap, enough iron for a medium sized nail, enough sulphur to delouse a dog, enough lime to whitewash a chicken coup, enough magnesium for one dose of medicine, and enough phosphorous for a few boxes of matches."^{xi} Paul is making the point that raising these bodies upon His return means there is something about these elements that will go into the next age. There is something about the human body that will go on into eternity though these elements temporarily return to the earth. Perhaps that is because our bodies are the temple of the living Lord.

Ecclesiastes tells us we all go back to dust (Ecclesiastes 3:20^{xii}). Paul tells us that God will raise that dust into a transformed body that is like His glorious, resurrected body (Philippians 3:21^{xiii})! Nothing is too hard for God.

Think of all the saints who were burned at the stake or were buried at sea. Will God find it difficult to raise them? How powerful is our God? All powerful! The body is our earthly vehicle, or as Peter calls it, our tent (1 Peter 1:13^{xiv}). Our soul and spirit go to be with God upon our death (Philippians 1:23^{xv}). When Christ returns, our transformed bodies will rise to meet our spirits in the air (2 Thessalonians 4:14^{xvi}, 16^{xvii}).

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 prostitute? Never! ¹⁶ Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh." 1 Corinthians 6:15,16 Lewis Smedes, a Christian

ethicist and theologian, put it really well when he wrote, “There is more to sex than meets the eye—or excites the genitals. There is no such thing as casual sex, no matter how casual people are about it.” “No one can take sex out at night and put it away until he wants to play with it again, nobody can go to bed with someone and leave his soul parked outside.”^{xviii} Our bodies are sanctified for the Lord and become His dwelling place. Should these bodies then be joined to a prostitute? Paul is probably referring to temple prostitutes who serviced the pagan temple, but the principle is true for any illicit encounter. The two become one in sexual union (Matthew 19:5^{xix}). Is that the picture we should portray to the world? Is that the oneness our new spirit would ever desire? When a Christian man considers hiring a prostitute, he is forgetting that his body is dedicated to God as an instrument of righteousness (Romans 6:13^{xx}). Would he then use the body of a desperate woman, which houses an eternal soul, who is someone’s daughter, for a moment of carnal pleasure?

Sexual union is a unique expression of self-disclosure and self-commitment. If the body is to be raised to an immortal body, unlike the rest of this fallen material world that will perish forever, this member of the body of Christ joined to a pagan temple prostitute should have been unthinkable. Perhaps it was an expression of the way they had distorted grace. It sounds unthinkable, but it is almost as common today in our culture as it was in the Corinthian world. The culture acts as if it is no big deal, but it is a soul issue!

Verse 19 says our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, and in verse 15 that it’s a member of Christ! What Paul is saying is absolutely revolutionary! Absolutely radical! Our bodies are the place where God has chosen to live and the very thing he has chosen to make a part of himself! He’s bound himself so tightly to us, even our bodies, because he wants to be with us—for us to be his and for him to be ours—forever! No other religion would ever dare say anything even remotely close to that. Gods live in temples, not in human bodies. Gods keep their distance; they don’t wrap themselves up with people, especially not their bodies. But this One does! Our bodies have tremendous value, and they cannot be treated casually because they matter eternally!^{xxi} The other extreme is the ridiculous claim that we are God, which is the ultimate expression of the fallen ego.

¹⁷ But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. 1 Corinthians 6:17 Our union is with Christ. Our oneness is in Him. Marriage pictures our union with Christ, our intimacy with Him, the desire to please one another, to live for one another in faithfulness (Ephesians 5:32^{xxii}). To then have intimacy with someone else is breaking our vow to be faithful. That is why the Old Testament refers to idolatry as adultery (Jeremiah 3:9^{xxiii}). It is unfaithfulness to Jesus as Lord. Believers take Jesus with them wherever they go (Matthew 28:20^{xxiv}). How then can we do such a thing?

¹⁸ Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. ^{19a} Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? 1 Corinthians 6:18,19a Run! The Greek tense of this command means to make it your habitual behavior to run from sexual immorality. In other words, we will be tempted, and the response should always be to run or your life. The Corinthian culture believed sexual behavior did not affect one’s soul, but Paul is saying it is an offense against our very personality.

Joseph set an example for us when Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him (Genesis 39:12^{xxv}). He called it a *great* wickedness and a sin against God (Genesis 39:9^{xxvi}). Why is sexual sin to be especially shunned? Most other sins do not as directly represent our commitment of faithfulness to belong to Jesus, but rather are moral choices that we know are opposed to God's will. But when we engage the body in a sin like sexual immorality, whether adultery or homosexuality or fornication, the temple of our body is defiled (Proverbs 6:32^{xxvii}). It is comparable to bringing an idol into the Jewish Temple. It asks the Holy Spirit to depart for He can only dwell in a holy space and will not share it with that which is vile.

Such acts sin against our own body. Christians have dedicated the parts of our bodies to God for His use. Our body is the temple of God, and therefore sexual immorality is to defile our own body. It would be like taking some unclean thing into the temple in Jerusalem. The temple would then need to be cleansed by rituals prescribed in Leviticus for it to be used again for sacred purposes. That is what is behind the legend of Hanukkah (the feast of dedication).

Let me make clear that we are speaking about believers in Jesus. The world will do these things without hesitation and laud them as freedom and natural. It is natural for fallen man, though the negative consequences to the soul are the same. There is no need for us to wag our finger at them. They are acting according to their nature, the same nature we once lived in and even now tries to draw us back. The Holy Spirit convicts all people of sin. Until they yield to His conviction, our finger wagging will only annoy them. It is more helpful to share your testimony of how Jesus changed your life, how you found sin to never fully satisfy and always needing more (Ephesians 4:19^{xxviii}), but then how Jesus met that need in your heart and transformed your thinking and actions (Romans 12:1,2^{xxix}).

^{19b} You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. 1 Corinthians 19b,20 This is the sixth time in this letter that Paul has asked, "Do you not know?" It is as if he was saying, I taught you these truths, but weren't you listening? Don't you realize these truths. You don't belong to yourself.

Jesus purchased us with His own blood that we might be His dwelling place. We have no right to defile it. Think of building a room onto your house where you can go to pray and read the Word. Imagine walking in and finding it wall to wall covered in pornography of the vilest sort. It is a weak analogy, as we did not die for that room to be made into the perfect prayer space like Jesus did for our spirits. Or imagine your church making great expense to make the sanctuary just right for worship and then finding it used as a brothel. That might give us a vague idea of what we do when we use our bodies for sinful behavior.

Since we were purchased by the precious blood of Jesus, we are to glorify God with our bodies. That is why Paul tells us to do all for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31^{xxx}). Our speech and our actions should all glorify God. The only way to do that is to walk in step with the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:25^{xxxi}). We need to become attentive to His direction and have our desires become one with His. That was the example Jesus lived out for us (John 8:28^{xxxii}). None of us live in obedience to the extent that He did. However, the daily work of the Holy Spirit in us should be increasingly sanctifying our

thoughts and actions, transforming us into Christlikeness. We should see that change taking place.

One man in a Bible study truly took the Word to heart and began changing his behavior. His wife asked who he was. She said he was a different man than the one she had lived with for so long. That's a miracle! That is the process of sanctification (1 Thessalonians 5:23^{xxxiii}). He had more joy. He was kinder and gentler. In other words, the fruit of the Spirit became noticeable to those who saw him not only in public, but in private as well. The Holy Spirit was working through the Word to convict him of sin and then to help him walk in the Spirit. That's freedom. That is the joyful, disciplined, exciting life that God has for you. Eternal purpose and meaning are ours when we live in the Spirit.

Recently Luke taught through the book of Hosea. God told Hosea to marry a woman of a doubtful reputation. He was obedient, and he loved her. But she would go away and find pleasure in the arms of another man. He would find her and forgive her and take her back again and again. Then she left for a long time, and when he finally found her, she was on the slave block. She had to sell herself to pay her debts. She had reached the very bottom. As the bidding begins, she hears a familiar voice cry out, "Five shekels!" As the bidding goes on, she hears him again, "Ten shekels!" Now she sees him. It is Hosea. But why would he buy her back? Maybe he wants to abuse and humiliate her for all the heartache she has caused him. Then the final offer and Hosea yells, "Fifteen shekels," which is half the price of a healthy slave. "Sold!" He comes to claim her, and instead of a rebuke, there is his gentle voice, "Let's go home" (Hosea 3:2,3^{xxxiv}).

Brothers and sisters, like Gomer, we were not even worth the full price of a slave (Exodus 21:32^{xxxv}), for we damaged our souls with selfish, sinful pleasures. But we were bought with a much higher price, by the very body and blood of Jesus. When we finally are claimed, He doesn't meet us with a rebuke but rather with an invitation to make His home in us so that one day we can go to our heavenly home with Him.

Since these wondrous truths are ours, we should glorify God in our bodies. That is the only right response when we consider all that God has done for us. All that we do should be for the glory of God. We should rise each day praying for opportunities to glorify our gracious God, and then watch for those opportunities, and experience the joy of the Lord as He graciously works through us (Galatians 2:20^{xxxvi}).

Questions:

- 1 How were the Corinthians abusing grace?
- 2 What law puts boundaries on that freedom?
- 3 What two expressions also limit that freedom in verse 12?
- 4 Who do poles show to be the most sexually satisfied people?
- 5 Is casual sex possible?
- 6 What was so radical about Paul's teaching?
- 7 Why does the Old Testament refer to idolatry as adultery?
- 8 What should be our response to sexual temptation?
- 9 How does promiscuity affect our bodies? Prov 6:32
- 10 Can you relate to the Hosea account? What price was paid?

ⁱ **Genesis 1:28 (ESV)**

²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

ⁱⁱ **Genesis 1:27 (ESV)**

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Romans 8:2-4 (ESV)**

² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

³ For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,

⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

^{iv} **Galatians 5:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

^v **1 Corinthians 10:23 (ESV)**

²³ “All things are lawful,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful,” but not all things build up.

^{vi} **1 Corinthians 8:13 (ESV)**

¹³ Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

^{vii} **John 15:12 (ESV)**

¹² “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

^{viii} **Romans 13:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

^{ix} **Romans 13:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

^x **Galatians 5:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

^{xi} Vett and Malone Inspired Evidence June 23

^{xii} **Ecclesiastes 3:20 (ESV)**

²⁰ All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return.

^{xiii} **Philippians 3:21 (ESV)**

²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

^{xiv} **2 Peter 1:13 (NIV)**

¹³ I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body,

^{xv} **Philippians 1:23 (ESV)**

²³ I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

^{xvi} **1 Thessalonians 4:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

^{xvii} **1 Thessalonians 4:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

^{xviii} Stephen T. Um, [1 Corinthians: The Word of the Cross](#), ed. R. Kent Hughes, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 117.

^{xix} **Matthew 19:5 (ESV)**

⁵ and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’?

^{xx} **Romans 6:13 (ESV)**

¹³ Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

^{xxi} Stephen T. Um, [1 Corinthians: The Word of the Cross](#), ed. R. Kent Hughes, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 117.

^{xxii} **Ephesians 5:32 (ESV)**

³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

^{xxiii} **Jeremiah 3:9 (ESV)**

⁹ Because she took her whoredom lightly, she polluted the land, committing adultery with stone and tree.

^{xxiv} **Matthew 28:20 (ESV)**

²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

^{xxv} **Genesis 39:12 (ESV)**

¹² she caught him by his garment, saying, “Lie with me.” But he left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house.

^{xxvi} **Genesis 39:9 (ESV)**

⁹ He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”

^{xxvii} **Proverbs 6:32 (ESV)**

³² He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself.

^{xxviii} **Ephesians 4:19 (NIV)**

¹⁹ Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

^{xxix} **Romans 12:1-2 (ESV)**

¹ I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

^{xxx} **1 Corinthians 10:31 (ESV)**

³¹ So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

^{xxxi} **Galatians 5:25 (ESV)**

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

^{xxxii} **John 8:28 (ESV)**

²⁸ So Jesus said to them, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me.

^{xxxiii} **1 Thessalonians 5:23 (ESV)**

²³ Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

^{xxxiv} **Hosea 3:2-3 (ESV)**

² So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a lethech of barley.

³ And I said to her, “You must dwell as mine for many days. You shall not play the whore, or belong to another man; so will I also be to you.”

^{xxxv} **Exodus 21:32 (ESV)**

³² If the ox gores a slave, male or female, the owner shall give to their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.

^{xxxvi} **Galatians 2:20 (ESV)**

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.