

YOU ARE NOT YOUR OWN

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

(Read 1 Corinthians 6:12-20)

INTRO: Dave Ramsey would walk up one side of me and down the other if he knew how many cars I have bought through the years by financing them. I think, in fact, I bought all but my first two that way. Ol' Dave thinks people should buy cars for cash and to buy new ones is crazy since you should let someone else depreciate them for you. I agree with him, all that interest we paid would be nice to have now to live and to give like no other. But we paid every one of them off. And when we did, we would receive a nice title of full ownership for the car from the bank – and it felt awesome. We will soon pay our house off too – something we've never done because we never lived in one place long enough to do it. Now we have, and, Lord willing, we will receive a deed for our home – it will be our own. While we are paying on our home, the bank expects us to properly care for their investment. They also want me to keep it insured with adequate coverage. Until I receive that deed I can't properly answer the question "Do you own your home?" with anything other than, "Yes, well. . . kinda, actually the bank has the deed because I have _ _ _ _ more payments." So Kathy and I have a home, but we REALLY don't technically own it YET!

As Christ Followers, we left the deed to our lives in God's possession. Forever. We are not our own. That means he has a say in our lives. In fact, he has THE say in our lives. At least he is supposed to. Sometimes we're reluctant to hand over control. This is a perennial problem. We're human, and we're stubborn. We start thinking we can decide what we can and can't do – and it's true, but we are going contrary to scripture AND our agreement of ownership with God.

This was Paul's struggle with his spiritual children in Corinth. They thought the freedom they had in Jesus meant they could do anything they pleased. They thought they could interpret life in their own way and that led to what we looked at in 1 Corinthians 5 where there was an incestuous relationship going on that seemed to be countenanced by the rest of the church, even though such living was taboo for the amazingly sinful pagan population.

They had become a law unto themselves and Paul faced them down pointblank. In verse 12 of our text he quotes what he's been hearing with, 'I have the right to do anything,' you say – but not everything is beneficial. 'I have the right to do anything' – but I will not be mastered by anything. (verse 12). And Paul says in effect, that may be technically true, but . . .

Rights don't make it right

- In other words, as numerous commentators and preachers have said, **Liberty is not license**. Here's the point, whether you're a Corinthian Christian or an Ashlandian Christian, we are not our own – we are God's precious possessions and in Kenneth Forman's words, "As God's own the Christian is free—to do what God pleases. Christian Freedom is in God and under God; it is not freedom from God." The world might say its okay, whatever is the behavior is, but if God says it's not – IT'S NOT!
- In this passage Paul is dealing specifically with sexual immorality. Some translations spell it right out as fornication, which is, plainly speaking, illicit sexual activity. Illicit sexual activity is anything that is outside a committed marriage relationship of a man and a woman. The issue in Corinth was, by appearances, sexual intercourse with temple prostitutes. Paul is restrained in his response, but he clearly wants to blast them with "WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?!!!!!! When they suggest it's just exercising their free-will and God's grace will cover them. His response – sex is good, it is God's beautiful gift, IN THE CORRECT WAY. The wrong way is the way of corruption (meant in the sense of defilement).
- We are not our own and we need to rely on the power of God to resist the temptation to abuse our freedom and slip into that corruption. So, he points out very carefully . . .

The power that raised Jesus from the dead is power enough for us.

- Or as F. B. Meyer puts it, "*The power that raised the body of Jesus from the grave is surely strong enough to raise our bodies from the bondage of corruption.*" These were extremely hopeful words for the Corinthians who, before they knew Christ, were steeped in the pagan corruption of Greco Roman culture which made sexual expression little more than a bodily function. With what Paul is saying here they know that the danger of slipping back into that sinful life is extremely real – in fact, it's obvious it was openly

happening. But there is hope for the one who has fallen and a promise, that with the help of the Holy Spirit, there is deliverance.

- And it's all through the power of the resurrection. The One who can bring the dead back to life – even the one who had died with all the sin of humanity for all history absorbed into his soul, can certainly help the faithful Christ Follower to have victory over sin – even sexual sin with its seemingly irresistible and magnetic pull.
- Our bodies are intended for so much more than mindlessly submitting them to the temptation and ultimate dissolution and corruption of sexual dissipation. As I said before, sex is good. Christians are accused of being prudish and uptight about sex. We aren't, but we do know how used in the wrong way it can be destructive. How is it so? Well, in Paul's words, sexual immorality is:

Against one's own body

Against one's own spirit

Against the Holy Spirit

Against God

- This is alleviated by keeping sex as God's wonderful gift to humanity in the proper God-given boundaries of a man and a woman in a sacred marriage relationship. This had been corrupted in Corinth, but, Paul shows unequivocally that Jesus's resurrection reveals the body is for much more than corruption. And with that in mind . . .

Don't squander what God paid such a high price for

- Paul says FLEE from sexual immorality. (v18a) The NRSV says Shun fornication! The idea is to beat it hastily in the other direction when the temptation comes. Paul uses the strongest language when he asks and answers his own question, Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! (v. 15b). He feels pretty strongly about it. That word "Never" is really tame compared to the near profanity Paul signified in the Greek word he actually used.
- Here's the point, God, by his Spirit, cannot be where such corruption is. We are a temple of the Holy Spirit. (v. 19) and in Gordon Fee's words, "*As God's presence inhabited the Temple in Jerusalem, his Spirit inhabits the child of God.*" F. B. Meyer writes, "*Be so filled with the Spirit of the risen Savior that the desires of the flesh shall have no fascination.*" And he goes on to suggest there are two laws if you are in doubt about what is wrong and what is right. 1) *Keep from doing what threatens to become a master.* 2) *Keep from anything that might be stumbling block for another's Christian life.*
- Make sure Christ is your master, and as you do you will be a picture of holiness for others to emulate.

Conclusion: Let me conclude with Gordon Fee's summary of his 15-20 pages of commentary on this passage in the **NEW INTERNATIONAL COMMENTARY ON THE NEW TESTAMENT**. It's a rather lengthy quote, but it sums up for me.

"Two points from this passage need to be emphasized in the contemporary church. First, in most Western cultures, where sexual mores have blatantly moved toward pagan standards, the doctrine of the sanctity of the body needs to be heard anew within the church. Sexual immorality is still sin, even though it has been justified under every conceivable rationalization. Those who take Scripture seriously are not prudes or legalists at this point; rather they recognize that God has purchased us for higher things. Our bodies belong to God through the redemption of the cross; and they are destined for resurrection. Part of the reason why Christians flee sexual immorality is that their bodies are for the Lord, who is to be honored in the deeds of the body as well as in all other behavior and attitudes.

Second, this passage needs to be heard again and again over against every encroachment of Hellenistic dualism that would negate the body in favor of the soul. God made us whole people; and in Christ he has redeemed us wholly. In the Christian view there is no dichotomy between body and spirit that either indulges the body because it is irrelevant or punishes it so as to purify the spirit. The pagan view of physical existence finds its way into Christian theology in a number of subtle ways, including the penchant on the part of some to "save souls" while caring little for people's material needs. The Christian creed, based on New Testament revelation, is not the immortality of the soul, but the resurrection of the body. That creed does not lead to crass materialism; rather it affirms a holistic view of redemption that is predicated in part on the doctrine of

creation—both the physical spiritual orders are good because God created them—and in part on the doctrine of redemption, including the consummation—the whole fallen order, including the body, has been redeemed in Christ and awaits its final redemption.” (End Quote)

You are not your own, and that’s a good thing. Amen.