
Bible Knowledge Commentary - 1 Cor 6:12-20

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C. Failure to practice sexual purity ([6:12-20](#))

The theme of legality continued as Paul turned to another problem troubling the Corinthian assembly. This problem was the issue of freedom from the Old Testament Law in the area of sexual relationships. Paul addressed this issue in the manner of a dialogue, the diatribe style, familiar to his readers. This also enabled him to prepare them for both his subject matter and his approach in the rest of the letter, which concerned answers to questions and objections they had raised.

The issue of the limits of liberty ([v. 12](#)) was developed later by Paul in [chapters 8-10](#). To a degree this subject also colored the discussion on public worship in [chapters 11-14](#). The question of a Christian's relationship to food ([6:13](#)) was taken up in [chapter 8](#). The resurrection of Christ ([6:14](#)) was expounded in [chapter 15](#). The church as the body of Christ ([6:15](#)) was enlarged on in [chapter 12](#). The sanctity of sex ([6:16](#)), about which Paul quoted [Genesis 2:24](#) on the divine establishment of marriage, occupied his attention in [chapter 7](#).

6:12. The words, **Everything is permissible for me**, had apparently become a slogan to cloak the immorality of some in Corinth. The statement was true but it required qualification. Paul qualified liberty with the principle of love applied to both neighbor and self (cf. [Mark 12:31](#)). Liberty which was not **beneficial** but detrimental to someone else was not loving ([1 Cor. 8:1; 10:23](#)) and was to be avoided. So too, liberty which became slavery (**I will not be mastered by anything**) was not love but hatred of self.

[6:13-14](#)

6:13-14. **Food for the stomach and the stomach for food** was another slogan by which some Corinthians sought to justify their immorality. They reasoned that "food" was both pleasurable and necessary. When their stomachs signaled hunger, food was taken to satisfy them. So too, they argued, sex was pleasurable and necessary. When their bodies signaled sexual desire, they needed to be satisfied. But Paul drew a sharp line between the stomach and the **body**. The body (*sōma*) in this context (cf. [2 Cor. 12:3](#)) meant more than the physical frame; it referred to the whole person, composed of flesh (the material) and spirit (the immaterial; cf. [2 Cor. 2:13](#) with [7:5](#)). The "body," therefore, was not perishable but eternal ([1 Cor. 6:14](#)), and it was **not meant for sexual immorality** (*porneia*) but for union with the Lord ([vv. 15-17](#)), which is reciprocal (cf. [Eph. 1:23](#)). The eternity of the body, the future destiny of the individual, was made certain by Christ's resurrection ([1 Cor. 6:14](#); cf. [15:20](#)).

[6:15-17](#)

[6:15-17](#). So too the work of the Spirit (cf. [12:13](#)) has affected Christians' present destiny and joined them to Christ ([6:15](#)). Could a Christian practice immorality without grieving Christ? (cf. [12:26](#)) **Never!**

The union of two people involves more than physical contact. It is also a union of personalities which, however transient, alters both of them ([6:16](#)). Paul quoted [Genesis 2:24](#) (**The two will become one flesh**) not to affirm that a man and **a prostitute** are married but to indicate the gravity of the sin (cf. [Eph. 5:31-32](#)).

A Christian's union with Christ likewise affects both him and the Savior, and one cannot act without affecting the other.

[6:18](#)

[6:18](#). Corinthian Christians, when faced with immorality, should respond as did Joseph ([Gen. 39:12](#))—they should run. **Flee from sexual immorality**. Immorality was a unique sin but not the most serious (cf. [Matt. 12:32](#)). It was, however, an offense against the sinner and those with whom he was related.

It is possible that the statement **All other sins a man commits are outside his body** (the word "other" is a translator's addition and is not represented by any word in the Gr. text) should be taken as a third slogan (cf. [1 Cor. 6:12-13](#)) bandied about by some in Corinth. If so, then Paul's rejoinder (**he who sins sexually sins against his own body**) is a straight-forward denial. The Greek construction is similar to that in [verse 13](#).

[6:19-20](#)

[6:19-20](#). Among those grieved was the **Holy Spirit** who indwells every Christian (**who is in you**; cf. [12:13](#); [1 John 3:24](#)). Also God the Father is grieved, for He seeks **honor** ([Matt. 5:16](#)), not shame, from those who are **bought at a price** (cf. [1 Cor. 7:23](#)), that price being "the precious blood of Christ" ([1 Peter 1:19](#)).