

## Who We Are in Christ Informs How We View “Freedom”

1 Corinthians 6:12-14

*This portion comes at the following point in the outline.*

- II. Paul’s response to reports of division (1:10-6:20).
  - A. A church divided, internally and against Paul (1:10-4:21).
  - B. Sexual immorality and litigation: how Paul’s authority, the gospel, and the wisdom of God apply to real issues (5:1-6:20).
    1. The incestuous man (5:1-13).
    2. Lawsuits against each other (6:1-11).
    3. **Sexual immorality and who we are in Christ (6:12-20).**

### Introduction

*Verses 12-20 deal with how who we are in Christ informs sexual immorality. From what Paul says, it seems that some of the Corinthians were using prostitutes, possibly justifying it by believing that since we are free in Christ, any sort of behavior is permissible. Paul’s emphasis in these verses is that our union with Jesus includes our bodies, and that reality informs how we view the whole of our physical and spiritual being.*

*In verses 12-14, the text for this study, Paul quotes two phrases that may have been popular, and counters them with ethical, doctrinal, and resurrection realities. Even if there is freedom in Christ, that doesn’t mean we use it selfishly or incorrectly.*

### Verses (Including verses 15-20)

<sup>12</sup>“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. <sup>13</sup>“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. <sup>14</sup>And God raised 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 take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! <sup>16</sup>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.” <sup>17</sup>But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. <sup>18</sup>Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. <sup>19</sup>Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, <sup>20</sup>for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

### Questions

1. General.
  - a. What are your initial observations, thoughts, or questions about the passage?
  - b. How would you briefly describe the passage?
    - The very purpose for which God made us physically, and the reality of how the resurrection applies to us, speaks to us about the entirety of our physical being, how we think about what we do with our bodies, and how we view our freedom in Christ.
2. Specific Verses.
  - a. What is the quote to which Paul refers in verse 12? What do you think the Corinthians may have meant by using this?

- The quote is “all things are lawful for me.” He actually quotes it again almost verbatim in 10:23 (“All things are lawful,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful,” but not all things build up.) to emphasize doing things in love for people and for the glory of God.
- They may have been mistakenly viewing their freedom in Christ (Ro. 5:20 - Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more...; Ga. 5:1 - For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.) as “permission” to engage in sexual immorality. There certainly is freedom on matters of conscience (Ro. 14:22 - The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves.). But there is also a clear delineation between matters of conscience and matters of obvious sin. So they are misusing freedom.

b. How does Paul counter the quote?

- He doesn’t actually tell them that they are misinterpreting the whole idea of matters of conscience, or what we call Christian liberties. He will certainly condemn sexual immorality in the rest of the passage, and he does address the proper way to look at Christian liberties in passages like Romans 14:1-23 and 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 and 10:23-33. What he does emphasize is that just because something is permissible doesn’t make it helpful - what you think is permissible may be not good or even harmful for you or others. Then, he emphasizes that it is wrong for these things to control you. This is really relating to selfishness and even idolatry.

c. What do you think the Corinthians may have meant by the quote about food and the stomach in verse 13?

- Another justification for their sexual immorality may have had something to do with a cultural and pervasive dualistic false teaching that anything “physical” didn’t matter - it was someone’s immaterial aspect that was important - so it didn’t matter what you did with your body.

d. How does Paul respond to this?

- He first says that God will destroy both food and the stomach. It seems he’s agreeing with them on one level - that the physical realm as we experience it will pass away.
- But then his next statement exposes the flaw in their reasoning. They were extending this saying and example to sexual immorality, and he opposes this. He clearly states that our bodies were designed for the Lord. We can’t merely say the physical aspect of who we are is inconsequential. God has designed us - spiritually and physically - to relate to and bring glory to him (Ro. 6:19 - Present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification. 1 Co. 10:31 - Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God).

e. How does Paul add a final emphasis to what he’s saying in verse 14?

- He says that God raised Jesus, and he will raise us too. This future sharing of what happened to Jesus physically that we will all experience informs the way we view our bodies, particularly here related to sexual immorality.

f. What do you think are some applications for us from this passage?

- We should view matters of conscience properly in relation to helpfulness, selfishness, and idolatry. We should also know the differences between matters of conscience and what is clearly sin.
- We should regard the magnitude of the fact that God has designed us in our whole being to bring glory to and relate to him. This affects everything relating to our minds **and** bodies, including sexual immorality.