

THE CHURCH AND PERSONAL PURITY

I Corinthians 6:12-20

Following what we have seen in the early part of this chapter as to the believer's cleansing, sanctification and justification in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Holy Spirit, we are now asked to consider some of the practical results of all this. If we have been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, if we have been regenerated by the Word and the Holy Spirit, then we are no longer to live to please ourselves but the One Who has made us His own at such a cost. So Paul stresses particularly the importance of recognizing our bodies as belonging to our risen Lord.

The honor of the body was never really revealed until Christ came. If you are at all familiar with the different heathen philosophies and pagan religions, you know that a great many of these philosophers and teachers said, "It does not make any difference to what use you put the body. It is merely physical, and when you die it is gone. Even though your soul may persist after death, the body will never rise again, and it is impossible to defile the soul by anything you may do with the body." That was the very essence of the philosophy that was taught in Corinth, where the Apostle had been used of God for the calling out of this company of redeemed ones, whom he addresses as "The Church of God," and, therefore, there was very grave danger that they might bring over to the new Christian position some of the old pagan conceptions and in that way fail to appreciate the holiness and the purity that should be connected with the physical life of the believer as well as with his spiritual life.

It seems that there were those in the church at Corinth who regarded Christianity as giving them a kind of liberty to do whatever they wished. Some of them, having left Judaism with its various restraints, and others, having deserted paganism, which also had restrictions, were too ready to push the doctrines of religious liberty, as proclaimed by Paul, far beyond its limits. The Apostle here states, perhaps in answer to a question on the subject, that there is a limitation to Christian liberty. Paul shows that the believer in Christ has not come into any legal relationship with God. He is not under law; he has marvelous liberty, but not to do wrong. He must distinguish between license and liberty. An instructed believer will never say, "I am in Christ, and it does not make much difference what I do." A man who talks like that shows that he has never apprehended the reality of what "in Christ" means.

There was a special danger in Corinth lest believers, becoming careless under the immoral influences by which they were surrounded, should lapse into the sins which so largely characterized the populace. Their chief trouble can be summarized by saying that the spirit of the city had infected the church.

I. The Danger Of Transgressing Liberty. I Corinthians 6:12a.

Paul set forth a noble doctrine of Christian liberty saying, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient." He was quoting something that was being said by the Corinthian leaders and teachers. They were saying, "All things are lawful." In other words, do not exercise any restraints at all, but just express yourselves.

God's Word teaches that no Christian has the liberty to be immoral and impure. Neither does he have the right to exercise liberty to the point where conduct becomes injurious to another. Hence, Paul said, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient." That means that, even though the law does not prescribe against them, common sense tells us they are not profitable. "Expedient" carries with it the idea of helping us on our way. Something may be lawful for me, but I am not living alone and cannot do so. What may be lawful for me, may be impossible for me for the sake of others. Many things that are lawful are utterly unsuited to a Christian. They would bring a Christian's testimony into disrepute. Self-respect should keep a Christian from doing many things.

II. The Danger Of Moral Slavery. I Corinthians 6:12b.

Paul said, "All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." Every human appetite has a proper purpose. All were implanted for a good reason. Legitimate appetites and proper desires may become our masters and we their slaves. Sin is a savage and fierce monster.

III. The Danger Of Desecrating The Body. I Corinthians 6:13-30.

In this passage Paul is emphasizing the truth that the human body is not designed for licentiousness, but it is to be devoted to the Lord. Licentiousness was the sin to which the Corinthian Christians were exposed. They lived in the midst of a people who practiced and vindicated it.

The body is for the Lord because He needs it in His service. He has no hands with which to work except our hands. He has no feet with which to walk except our feet. He has no tongues with which to speak except our tongues. He has no heart through which to love except our hearts.

The Lord is for the body. There is a great deal suggested in these words. There is the suggestion of divine watchcare over our bodies. He provides for their needs. He gives food for nourishment and raiment for protection.

1. A personal realization.

"Ye are not your own." Many think and act as if they were their own masters. Consequently, they follow their own desires and go their own ways. You may ask, "Why are we not our own?" Because we did not create ourselves, have not sustained ourselves and cannot save ourselves. We are not our own to injure, to waste or to follow our own prejudices, depraved affections, wayward wills or evil appetites.

2. A positive reason.

"For ye were bought with a price." What were we redeemed from? The wrath of God, the vassalage of Satan, the curse of the law and the reigning power of sin. Who were the purchasers? God the Father, Who gave His Son, (John 3:16) and Christ the Son, Who gave Himself. "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." Matthew 20:28. The Son gave Himself--His happiness, riches, honor, glory, liberty, body, blood, soul, life and all. When a thing is bought, it becomes wholly the property of the purchaser. He may keep it and use it as he pleases.

Divine ownership rests on purchase. By His shed blood Christ has acquired all rights of ownership over us. Ownership demands submission. If ownership confers any privilege, it is the right to control. It is His prerogative to control our lives. It is His to speak and ours to obey. It is His to rule and ours to submit. Ownership is a pledge of protection. We are ever ready to guard our own possessions. Christ will certainly protect those whom He has purchased with His own blood. Our safety is of tremendous importance to Him. Ownership also confers enjoyment. The house may be very small and the garden that surrounds it may be nothing more than a narrow strip of soil in which a few flowers grow, but if it belongs to the occupant it will be very dear to him, more so than to any other. Since we belong to Christ, we should honor Him by piety and purity.

Divine ownership also rests on the ground of possession. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" Here the divine possession is real, reasonable, permanent and fruitful of blessed issues.

3. A persistent responsibility.

"Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." It

is our responsibility to glorify Him Who purchased us with His own blood. We can glorify Him by praise. "Whoso offereth praise glorified Me." We can also glorify Him by obedient service. This is the time and place in which we have the privilege of glorifying Him in our bodies. In and through our bodies we carry out His will upon the earth.