

# Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

## *You Must be Born Again!*

*True repentance begins with knowledge of sin. The eyes of the repentant person are opened. He sees the length and breadth of God's holy law with distress and confusion. He sees the extent, the enormous extent, of his own transgressions. To his surprise, he discovers that he has been under a huge delusion by thinking of himself as a good person with a good heart. He learns that in reality he is wicked, guilty, corrupt, and evil in God's sight. His pride breaks down. His high thoughts melt away. He sees that he is a great sinner. This is the first step in true repentance.*

*Ryle, J. C.. Repentance - What it Means to Repent and Why We Must Do So (pp. 3-5). Aneko Press. Kindle Edition.*

[www.sermonaudio.com/crc](http://www.sermonaudio.com/crc)

[www.unholycharade.com](http://www.unholycharade.com) (blog)

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## *Being a Holy People in an Unholy World*

*November 10, 2024*

**Sermon Text:** 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

**Scripture Reading:** 1 Corinthians 10

1Co 10:31 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Corinth was a wicked city – just like the cities around us today. Fee explains the thinking that had infected the church there:

“Apparently some men within the Christian community were going to

prostitutes and were arguing for the right to do so. Being people of the Spirit, they imply, has moved them to a higher plane, the realm of the spirit, where they are unaffected by behavior that has merely to do with the body.

The Corinthian “pneumatics” (as proponents of this dualistic body/spirit philosophy are called) understood spirituality which allowed them both a false view of freedom (“everything is permissible”) and of the body (“God will destroy it”), from which basis they have argued that going to prostitutes is permissible because the body doesn’t matter.

The net result of Paul’s teaching here is one of the more important theological passages in the New Testament about the body. It should forever lay to rest the implicit dualism of so much that has been passed off as Christian, where the body is rejected, subdued, or indulged because it is of no significance for – or is even a hindrance to – “real salvation,” which is said to do only with the

soul.” [Gordon Fee, New Testament Commentary]

The context here is that Paul had just warned them of this:

1Co 6:9-10 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, (10) nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

And he had just reminded them of who they were now in Christ:

1Co 6:11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Those in the church who were pursuing this immorality actually boasted about it, claiming a perverse kind of “Christian liberty.” Paul opens this section with what was apparently these

people's slogan – *All things are lawful for me.*” This no doubt was a perversion of Paul's teaching that all things are lawful for the Christian in regard to the Old Covenant law which specified clean and unclean foods. They twisted this teaching into something like this:

*“As it is right to eat all kinds of food which are adapted to the stomach, so it is right to gratify any other natural desire.”*

Follow along as I read this section, then we will make some more general observations and applications to our day before moving in for a closer look at Paul's argument.

1Co 6:12-20 “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. (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. (14) And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.

(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.” (17) But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.

(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. (19) 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, (20) for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

First, by way of application, here is Gordon Fee once again:

“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 (ie, body and soul are separate) 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. This pagan view of existence finds its way into Christian theology in a number of subtle ways, including the insistence on the part of some to ‘save souls’ while caring little for people’s material needs. The Christian doctrine, based on New Testament revelation, is not the immortality of the soul, *but the resurrection of the body.* That doctrine 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 and the spiritual orders are good because God created them – and the whole fallen creation, including the body, has been redeemed in Christ and awaits the final redemption.” [Ibid]

This false doctrine of dualism has also widely infected churches in regard to the typical idea of heaven.

Most professing Christians think of heaven as a “spiritual” place of disembodied spirits, foggy vaporous objects – and generally a place where we really would rather not be. Earth appeals to us more. But the New Heavens and Earth are REAL. We will be resurrected as body and soul just like God created Adam and Eve. We are not destined to an eternity among ghosts!

Listen then now to Paul as he corrects these Corinthians:

1Co 6:12-14 “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. (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. (14) And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.

In Christ, we do indeed have freedom from the Law, but this

freedom does not mean lawlessness. It is not anarchy. To be under grace is not a rejection of God’s moral law.

So, yes, it is true that all things are lawful for us in Christ – but that means that our relationship to God is not based upon the Old Covenant, but upon the New Covenant of grace which includes God’s moral law.

Coveting, adultery, stealing, lying, murdering....are all still unlawful. And as Paul notes, they are unlawful *because they are not helpful*. Sin is destructive, including sexual sin which was being practiced in Corinth.

Furthermore, as Paul tells them, to indulge the flesh in sinful ways *is evidence that such a person is still dominated by the flesh*. Paul sets this truth out in more detail in Romans 6 –

Rom 6:1-14 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? (2) By no means! How can we who died to

sin still live in it? (3) Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? (4) We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. (5) For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

(6) We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, *so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.* (7) For one who has died has been set free from sin.

(8) Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. (9) We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. (10) For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.

(11) So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. (12) *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.* (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. (14) *For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.*

As it turns out therefore, these libertines at Corinth were in fact showing that they were not free at all but were being dominated by sin.

What does Paul mean by this? –

(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.

Apparently Paul is quoting another one of these libertine's slogans – *food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food. Therefore, since God created the body for sex as well, it is right to indulge the body with no restraints.*

*God will destroy both one and the other....* What does this mean? It appears that Paul is reminding them that *this is a fallen world and human beings are fallen in sin. This world will be destroyed by the Lord, and our present corruptible bodies will return to dust as well.* That is to say, *something has gone wrong with this creation, including your bodies!* Paul is telling them:

***Man is born in sin. And even the Christian still has this fallen body, this flesh with all of its evil desires. Therefore, to argue that we are free to indulge our flesh in its lusts is to deny the sinfulness of our flesh. Which is actually to deny the reality of sin! Man murders with his body, he steals with his body, he curses and lies with his mouth.***

“Paul will not let these libertines take the slogan “food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food,” and transfer it to immoral sexual relations. Their reasoning had gone something like this – ‘Since everything is permitted, and since food is for the stomach and the stomach for food (after all, God will destroy them both in the end), and since all bodily appetites are pretty much alike, that means that the body is for sex and sex for the body because after all, God will destroy them both as well.’ But their conclusions are dead wrong.”  
[Fee, Ibid]

There is more to man's body however than merely a return to dust. The Corinthian libertines had also forgotten *the resurrection of the body*. You see Paul reminding them of it –

1Co 6:14 And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.

Our lives are to reflect this. We must be who we now are in Christ, and we must use our bodies and

**sexually immoral person sins against his own body.**

entire being in light of the new creation we now are. In the New Creation, when we and all creation are fully and finally glorified, *our bodies will be included in that glory. Perfect, sinless, holy as we are meant to be.* Therefore our present lives are to be in conformity to that glory. Mind, body, spirit.

What else do we see in this passage? It is this-

*Sexual sin is a uniquely destructive sin.*

1Co 6:15-18 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.”** (17) But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. (18) Flee from sexual immorality. **Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the**

Understand? Sexual sin is uniquely destructive. It has a devastating character which is unique among other sin. Why? Because God created man’s sexuality for a very good purpose – that husband and wife would become one flesh. A real spiritual as well as physical union. *But sexual sin takes what was created for good and turns it to evil purpose, thus resulting in a kind of dark union, a perverted oneness which is, as Paul puts it, a sin against the sinner’s own body.*

In other words, for a Christian to engage in sexual immorality is to take that which is holy to the Lord and join it to that which is unholy. In the Corinthians’ case, joined to a prostitute. A bond is formed that is destructive.

For instance, how many professing Christians, let’s say a young person, have indulged in sexual sin with an unbeliever, and found themselves bound to that person? This twisted distortion of God’s



purpose for one-flesh union results in a union which is incredibly difficult to break.

Here is Paul speaking to the same church in his second letter:

2Co 6:14-18 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? (15) What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? (16) What agreement has the temple of God with idols?

For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (17) Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, (18) and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty."

The Corinthian libertines, in other words, were joining the temple of God with Satan (Belial). They were taking the temple of God and merging it with an idol.

Sexual sin has a uniquely destructive effect upon the sinner. It is a sin against one's own body. We, in Christ, are the holy temple of God and sexual sin even more than other sins, defaces and desecrates the Christian. It alienates the believer from God. If we are to enjoy the fellowship with the Lord which is ours, then we must "go out from their midst and be separate from them."

Paul ends his instruction with this:

1Co 6:19-20 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, (20) for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

A Christian is not his own. We have been purchased by Christ's blood at the cross. Redeemed.

Ransom paid. We belong to our Lord. He has taken up residence in us. Do not desecrate then what is His.

Let's make one final important application – two really:

1. Many young people who have been raised in Godly homes and who have professed Christ and been baptized, have ended up making shipwreck of their faith, departing from the church and from their walk with Christ, because they were trapped by the enemy through sexual sin. We have seen it repeatedly in this church. So let's all be warned – Apply the following to man or woman:

Pro 2:16-19 So you will be delivered from the forbidden woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words, (17) who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God; (18) for her house sinks down to death, and her paths to the departed; (19) none who go to her

come back, nor do they regain the paths of life.

Understand? Sexual sin is a powerful favorite of Satan. Most people who yield to it never come back.

2. We are surrounded by a world filled with sexual perversions and lures. Consider, for instance this entire evil of pornography. This is a modern day form of being joined to a prostitute. It is not harmless. It is deadly. It destroys. *Flee from it like Joseph fled from Potiphar's wife.*

Come out from among them and be separate. You are not your own. You have been bought with a price. Glorify God in your body.