

Christ Community Covenant Church
Living uprightly in a broken and fallen world: I will not be mastered by anything!
Pastor Dave Scherrer - November 6, 2016

Several years ago I remember an account that I always thought would make a great sermon illustration. I just never found the right time to share it. I looked out my bedroom window as I was getting for the day on Saturday pretty early in the morning and saw a parable of modern American life. A middle-aged man in a jogging suit (so you know it was a while ago) was jogging/walking down the street. He kind of caught my eye as he was looking over his shoulder and seemed to be looking for someone following him, perhaps to catch up. Then he stopped completely, kind of abruptly, so now I'm interested. He looked to his left, then his right and then behind him in the direction that he had come from and reaching into the front pocket of his hoody and pulled out something yellow, a banana maybe and looked around a bit and started eating it. He kind of wolfed it down, then with something in his hand he took a couple of steps into the field across from our house and threw something into the field. Then he jogged off. That had the best of me. I went outside to look at what it was that he had been eating and it was a Twinkie wrapper. Immediately upon picking up the Twinkie wrapper I said to myself there are two ways to live outside of God . . .

Two ways to live outside of God . . .

- 1. Look left, right and behind**
- 2. Because I can**

The culture we live in is pushing back all the time against the new way that we live as Christ Followers. Our culture is the culture of the Kingdom of God; a new way of prioritizing things, new ways of treating other people, new ways of thinking about right and wrong. In a phrase, we live according to the Gospel (the good news) of the Kingdom.

The "this world culture" has its own cultural rules as well. They tend to be "don't get caught" – which give you the "look left, look right, and look behind" kind of behavior. It's not that there aren't rights and wrongs, we just try to keep them to a minimum and try not to be seen. I'm thinking my jogger didn't want someone to see him eating his Twinkie so he had to do it on the sly - counter intuitively, while exercising. We have seen it in our political landscape. Our candidates are only sorry when they have been caught and even then we don't get to many heart felt apologies. More like "I'm sorry you were offended." I guess the second thing that I found curious is that he simply tossed the trash into the street. I'm thinking that most all of us have this thinking that says don't litter – in both world views. But sometimes it seems ok to ignore these social morays – because I can.

Paul's concern for the church in this passage is to teach into a church that has developed some bad habits taking on worldly cultures, concerning their appetites of various kinds. So he feels he needs to teach into their church by way of this letter. Let's read our passage for this morning:

Prayer

1 Corinthians 6:12-20 (NASB) ¹² All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, **but I will not be mastered by anything.** ¹³ Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. ¹⁴ Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power. ¹⁵ Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! ¹⁶ Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body *with her*? For He says, "THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH." ¹⁷ But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit *with Him*. ¹⁸ Flee immorality. Every *other* sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. ¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? ²⁰ For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

This passage is rich in teaching and not easy to decipher. I don't think he is rambling though. I think Paul is making an argument that probably has more immediate impact for his church because of some specific things that are happening in the worldly culture of Corinth at that time. But I think the bottom line for this passage is "I will not be mastered by anything." It is as though he is saying just because I can doesn't mean I should.

I will not be mastered by anything: Just because I can doesn't mean I should . . .

Most scholars think that this phrase is a Corinthian slogan – "All things are lawful" and Paul is pushing back against it. Indeed all things are lawful in Christ that are not against Christ. Paul is the first to say "Be careful of your legalism." But legalism turned inside-out is licentiousness!

In the world we have two kind of rules of thumb (excuses) that usually we apply to:

**It's legal and/or . . .
Everyone's doing it**

We have things that are legal that for Christians should come under the test of the Kingdom of God. Just because I can doesn't mean that legalized marijuana is a good habit to get into. Abortion, certain financial practices, alcohol, tobacco, gambling, violent movies and video games; all of these are legal in our state. That doesn't make them a good idea for most of us. But we hear it as an excuse; "It's legal." Now if you want you will hear legalism in this. You hear your old church roots telling you "No. Stop. Don't. You shouldn't, it's bad, it's wrong." What I am really telling you is that you can be free from the standards of this world. I can choose to do what is healthy. I can choose to do what makes me stronger and what takes me deeper in Christ. I can choose the Kingdom of God. The so called freedom to act anyway we want without restraint is not freedom but another form of bondage. We're going to talk about that freedom in a moment but first I want to fill in some first century gaps that may help you get the deeper point that Paul is trying to share with us. We can start by reading it backwards.

Reading it backwards: sdrawkcab ti gnidaer

OK, not like this - but starting at the end of the passage and working backwards. It sometimes helps you get to the point of the paragraph. Verse 19 & 20 reveals to us a deep concern that the church understands the weight of glory found in our bodies.

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? ²⁰ For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

Going back to our culture wars from last week, there is a way of thinking in Corinth and in Greco-Roman culture in general led by Cynics and Stoics; that the body is not important, that only the soul lives forever. With that understanding it is possible to make the argument that you can do anything you want with the body and it's no big whoop because it is temporary. So people inside the church were buying this idea and going to visit prostitutes, especially the temple prostitutes of Aphrodite, the patron god of Corinth (found you will remember on the top of the impressive geological outcrop 'Acrocorinth'). Apostates come from people who, little by little, in things that are seemingly unimportant, ignored the voice of God in their own conscience. "Food for the body, the body for food—both will decay in the grave someday; it's not important how I eat or drink."

So Paul argues against this heresy by reminding them first that our bodies are very important for two reasons:

1. Our bodies will be resurrected. Verse 14 reminds us; "Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power." This mortal body will be made from a mortal form into an immortal form. Seemingly we will recognize each other in Heaven (remember the wonder of Christ's resurrected body!). In some mysterious manner our bodies will be restored not just refashioned. That is

important to Paul because it then means we need to treat our bodies with respect. In the case of this passage they must be treated with respect in regards to our sexuality.

2. But there is a bigger reason we are to treat our bodies well. They are the temple of God now! Paul understands that the Holy Spirit dwells in us as we yield to the authority of Christ. Titus tells us that the indwelling Spirit comes to a soul dead in sin and creates new life and this is the new birth Jesus spoke of in John 3. The letter of Corinth was written in 55 AD and in 15 years the temple would be utterly destroyed by Rome. Paul seems to anticipate this reality and pressed the church in Corinth to remember that we are indeed the temple of God, holding within us a treasure of surpassing value in clay pots as it were.

The dangers of slavery

God wants us to know that the slavery of habit is dangerous. Here is what I mean. The persistent refusal to say no to an enslaving habit (like overeating, or anger or lust or gossiping or chronic grumpiness) runs the risk of hardening your conscience so that you no longer feel guilty for that enslavement. And then other sin become more easy to justify and pretty soon it can happen that the whole biblical concept of spiritual warfare and vigilance and self-denial and self-control drops out of your life.

"Let him who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall!" Do you think you are beyond the possibility of making shipwreck of your faith?

1 Timothy 1:19 "By rejecting conscience, certain persons have made shipwreck of their faith, among them Hymenaeus and Alexander."

How did Hymenaeus and Alexander fall away from the Lord? Paul tells us in his little letter to his friend Timothy: "By rejecting conscience, certain persons have made shipwreck of their faith, among them Hymenaeus and Alexander."

They stopped hearing the voice that said "This is dangerous for you. This practice of thinking and behaving will make a shipwreck of your life." Ignore that voice long enough and you cannot hear it at all.

Instead Paul calls us to the freedom of being a *bond slave to Jesus Christ*. Voluntarily giving up our personal freedoms so that we can serve without restraint the will of the King of the Kingdom we now live under. And there are wonders upon wonders in this freedom in Christ.

The wonders of freedom

We should strive to free ourselves from all enslavements is that freedom is so wonderful. We put to death daily the old self so that we can live with abandonment in the new self.

When that man jogging down the street chose the pleasure of the stolen snack over the pleasure of a clear conscience, did he choose JOY?!!! No, he chose fear. He was afraid he would be discovered. Scripture tells us "Be sure your sin will find you out." But the Bible also tells us, "Happy is the man who has no reason to judge himself for what he approves."

John 8:34-36 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. ³⁵ The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

To give yourself of the fruit of the Spirit of self-control is to bring you freedom and life. To pommel the rebel body of this world into submission until it is no longer a master but a servant—this is victory and this is joy! Friends and church you were bought with a price. Your bodies count. They are the temple of the

Holy Spirit. Glorify God in your bodies: receive his gifts of pleasure with gratitude, and deny yourselves all excesses by the liberating addiction of his majesty.

“You are not your own! You were bought at a price.”

Examination/Communion

Benediction/ **1 Corinthians 10:31**

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