

Something the Devil loves to do, is to take something which God created as good, and pleasurable – something which has been **designed** by God, and is a gift **from** God (for us to enjoy), and then Satan perverts it, and he turns it into something which is dirty and bad...

One of those things, is the very food we eat.

As we read the New Testament, and especially in the letters **of** the New Testament, a common theme, which was very topical for the **early** church (but maybe not so much for us), is the whole subject of eating meat which has been sacrificed to idols... And so, in places like Corinth, **before** they became Christians, eating meat, was very much a part of the way they worshipped their pagan gods.. (*Oh, this rolled roast has been dedicated to Zeus, so let's all honour Zeus, kiddies, and eat up...*)...

And so when they became Christians, they had quite a dilemma “Can I still eat meat? Or, do I have to become a vegetarian?” (Now, that’s an awful thought isn’t it???) Imagine the cost of becoming a vegetarian for your faith...)

But you can see their dilemma: “If this animal has been sacrificed to a pagan God, can I eat its meat, without also worshipping that [little “g”] god...”

You see, God had given them, the gift of food – the gift of meat, for their sustenance and for their enjoyment,, but the Devil had perverted it, by turning it into a sacrifice to demons...

And so, Paul had a pretty big job, in helping these new Christians to be faithful to God, and at the same time, to experience and to live out the full **freedom** of the grace of God, and the freedom that we have in Christ.

And so he used to teach “**All things are lawful**”. If when you eat meat (even if it maybe **has** been sacrificed to an idol), if in yourself, you’re just eating tucker, and you’re not acknowledging or worshipping some other god, then you’re free to eat the meat.

And so, he was teaching them, that Christianity, is **not** a religion of “religious do’s and don’ts”, where we have to achieve certain goals in order to be saved. – Our faith is that we have been set free – This is the Law of grace. And so what Paul taught, across all of the Gentile churches, was “**All things are lawful**”. **Yes**, you **can** eat your meat. And **No**, you don’t have to obey all of the Jewish religious laws and customs.

- You **don’t** have to be circumcised
- You **don’t** have to worship on the Sabbath
- You **can** eat pork
- You can even eat kangaroo if you’re desperate. (Well he didn’t tell them that – he had no idea how bad kangaroo tastes)

We are set free from the law – that’s the Gospel.

But it’s pretty obvious that some within the church at Corinth, took this principal of freedom, and they began to apply it in all sorts of ways, that wasn’t at all, celebrating the freedom from

sin that we have in Jesus Christ. They were using the mantra of “freedom” to once again, enslave themselves **in** sin...

This was their logic:

If I am truly free – if all things are lawful for me, then I’m free to do whatever I like. And they used this perversion of “freedom”, to justify for themselves, an immoral lifestyle.

Which is why Paul says this:

¹² “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.

You see, rather than freed-men, they were captives. They were being dominated by sin and immorality.

You know how sometimes, the flesh gets the better of us??? Like, we’re tempted to do something, and we know that it’s wrong – we know that it dishonours God, but we take the attitude, “God will forgive me”....:

- “I know God doesn’t want me to do this, but God will forgive me.”
- “I know that this will dishonour God, but God will forgive me.”...

We take grace for granted. *I know I’ve done it... and sometimes later I’ve wept, in the knowledge that by taking grace for granted, it’s as if I’ve unnecessarily, driven yet another nail into Jesus.... (Now, I don’t know if that’s theologically right or not, but that’s the way I’ve felt – the*

conviction the Holy Spirit has brought upon me, when taking grace for granted)...

We were bought at a price – It was an extraordinary price – the blood of Jesus... Therefore we should glorify God (or honour God) in our body – by what we do and how we live...

One of the very first things that should be on our mind, when we get up in the morning, is “How can I honour God, with my body today?”... That’s how **Jesus** lived: Jesus lived, to glorify God... And we’ve been bought – we’ve been saved from sin, for the same purpose - to glorify God with our bodies.

You see, the world ,,,, – they don’t get to see how we think or how we feel about God, but they **do** get to see, how we either glorify God, or we dishonour God, with our bodies...

But let’s get more specific: Today’s reading, is specifically talking about sexual immorality.

I’ve heard people accuse Christians “of being obsessed with sex”. “Why, out of all of the different types of sin, are sexual sins, seen as so ‘extra bad’?”

Well, what we learn today, is “Sexual immorality is **not** a worse sin”, but it is different. Sin, is sin, is sin. We are all sinners.

- Is a sexually immoral person a worse sinner than a gossip? Not at all.

- Is a person who lusts, as they look at pornographic images, a worse sinner than someone who covets a sports car in a magazine, or someone who covets a diamond ring in the jeweller's window? Not at all.

All sin / Any sin, cuts us off from God, and is deserving of death.

- The one who falsely accuses, is no less guilty than the adulterer...

And so Sexual immorality is **not** a worse sin, but it is different. How is it different???

Well, first of all, Paul began by absolutely demolishing the Corinthian logic of "If I'm free, I'm free to do anything."

He said this: ¹³ "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food"

But that's all just temporary stuff. God has created you, in such a way, that you can eat food. And God has created the food, so it can be eaten by you... But God did not create your body, for sexual immorality.

Food, and the need to eat, are not eternal, but our bodies are... Have you managed to grasp this?

The Greeks used to long to be rid of their bodies. They believed their bodies were holding them back, and their

greatest desire, was, at death, to become a free or floating spirit...

Most of the eastern religions that our western society seems to be so enamoured with, seek to leave the body behind, and to fulfil the soul or the spirit. That's what the whole Yoga and Buddhist meditation are about... But God didn't only save our souls – He saved our bodies.

Just as Jesus Christ (**in the body**) was raised from the dead, **our** bodies will be raised.

Now, some of you mightn't be too happy with that. Some of us mightn't be too happy with the body you currently have ... Well, our bodies aren't going to be the same – they're going to be changed – they're going to be renewed... But don't be deceived – our bodies **are** eternal. When God renews this earth, our bodies aren't going to be left behind in a pile of ashes... **You** have been created as an eternal being – not just your Spirit – not just your soul – **YOU (all of you)**...

The body is not meant for sexual immorality, because it's eternal, and it's meant for the Lord. **and the Lord** [is meant] **for the body.**

Isn't that an enlightening thought? Not only are you meant for the Lord, but the Lord, is meant for you. And not just the Spirit – not just the soul... Your body is incomplete – more than that, – Your body, hasn't found its primary and most important purpose, unless it's filled with the Lord – unless **you** are filled with the Lord. That's our whole purpose for being...

Our bodies, are the temple of the Holy Spirit. The very holy place where God lives, is right here...

He says, ¹⁵ **Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?**

That means, “arms” “legs” “tissue and organs”... We, are the body of Christ...

Shall I then take the members of Christ [shall I take the tissue and organs of Christ] and make them members of a prostitute? Never!

When I was younger, I remember reading a book, written by someone who used to be warlock (a Satan worshipper) (a male version of a witch), but now he's a Christian. And he told how they used to try and desecrate Christ, by breaking into churches, and desecrating the communion wine and the bread... And what they did to it was repulsive...

But what Paul's saying here, is how sexual immorality, desecrates, because as a Christian, we have become part of Christ, and Christ is in us. Sexual immorality is not meant for the body.

Sex has been created by God, as “good” and “wonderful” and “holy”,, but Satan has perverted it, by taking it out of the committed relationship of marriage....

Most English translations of V18 say something like: 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.**

In the original Greek, the word “other” isn’t actually there. The original Greek actually says: **Every... sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.**

Alright, so no matter how ‘disconnected’ you **feel** the sexual act might be, it’s very much sinning, not just against God, but against one’s own body... It’s polluting the body.... **This**, is Christ’s home – it’s His temple,,, and sexual immorality pollutes it.

V15:

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.**

God created “sex” to be a thing of beauty. A man and a woman (in a covenant of marriage), commit to one another, before God. And biblically, it seems to be “the **act** of sex”, rather than the marriage ceremony itself, where a man and a woman, join together, to become one flesh...

There is nothing casual, about so-called ‘casual sex’ ...
Something mysterious – something that **I** can’t explain,
happens, when a man and a woman come together
physically... The persons join. The two become one...

And this is why sex-before-marriage, is ...

- ‘no little matter’
- It’s ‘dangerous’
- Some might describe it as being ‘soul destroying’ ,
because they find, they’ve joined themselves to
somebody, and they can’t take it back
- And very often, it becomes something which persists in
the memories and troubles future relationships, because
they have formed a one flesh relationship, with this
person they don’t even **know** anymore, or don’t even like
anymore...

And that’s why we should save ourselves for marriage. That’s
why we should save ourselves, for the person who loves us
more than they love themselves – for that person who loves us
enough to wait – for that person who loves enough to commit
before God, to the life-long covenant, of husband and wife –
one flesh together. At the exclusion of all others.

All others before... All others after...

That’s what marriage is about.

So, what’s the big, practical lesson here today??? Well, Paul
tells us two things. In the light of what Christ has done for us
– And, in the knowledge that our bodies, are the temple of the
Holy Spirit – in the knowledge, that when you join together

sexually with someone, you are becoming one body – one flesh....

He tells us two things:

Flee from sexual immorality. **Run** away from it. If you find that you're living in sin, and you don't know what to do about it... Stop thinking. Stop making excuses... **Run** away from it. **Flee..**

If you find you're in a place of temptation with your boyfriend or girlfriend,,, get out of there. Get out of the room – Flee. Run away. If the temptation is becoming too difficult, don't date alone – date together with others... Don't put yourself, where you know you're going to be in a position of temptation... (by the way, I'm speaking from experience here – I know how great the temptation is)...

And Paul's other word to us, is to glorify God in your body...

The more time we spend, glorifying God in what we do, the less opportunity we have, to toy with those temptations that **dishonour** God. And we need to understand this: Sex inside of marriage, glorifies God too...

Now,,,, having said all this,,,, every one of us, **also** needs to hear this:

Sexual immorality is not a worse sin, but it **is** different. It is **not** the unforgivable sin. **All** sin can be forgiven, except for the rejection of the activity of the Holy Spirit in Jesus¹. The only unforgivable sin, is the rejection of the one who brings forgiveness.

In Jesus Christ, there is **total** forgiveness – there is **total** freedom.

No matter what your history has been – no matter how any of us may have dishonoured God with our bodies in the past, repent (that’s what it means to flee. When you flee sexual immorality, that’s the repentance), and with repentance, comes forgiveness,, and a new chance, to honour God with our bodies.

We’re always saying, “The Gospel is “good news””, and it truly is “good news”, isn’t it???

Our bodies are eternal, and meant for Christ, and Christ is meant for us...

Let’s pray:

*Lord Jesus Christ, We thank You, that you bought our bodies,
At the enormous expense, of Your own life.*

*You died on the cross,
to set us free, from the Law of sin and death.
By Your blood, you have cleansed us –
You have made us holy...
You’ve renovated us, and made us people,
Fit, for You to live inside of us...*

*But oh the shame...
We have **not** honoured you with our bodies.
We have **not** glorified you with our bodies.
God, forgive us.*

Lord, we hear your word today, “Flee from sexual immorality”.

*And by Your grace, may we heed this word,
And obey this word...*

God, forgive us.

*You told us, that even if I look at a woman in lust,
I’ve already committed adultery –*

I say this from a man’s perspective,

But from a woman’s perspective,

*If I’ve longed for intimate connection with a man,
I’ve already committed adultery in my heart...*

*I already have sexual immorality... It’s not only in my heart,
It’s something dirty in me, that I need forgiveness for...*

God, forgive me.

*And Lord, I want to thank you,
That Your church – every one of us,
Come here today, on an equal footing,
Because we’re all forgiven sinners.*

*And Lord, may we be, a holy people,
Who glorify you with our bodies,
As You dwell in us,
By the power of Your Holy Spirit,*

*In Jesus' name,
Amen.*

ⁱ Matthew 12:22–32 (ESV)

²² Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. ²³ And all the people were amazed, and said, "Can this be the Son of David?" ²⁴ But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons." ²⁵ Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. ²⁶ And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? ²⁷ And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. ²⁸ But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹ Or how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house. ³⁰ Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. ³¹ Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. ³² And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

ⁱⁱ John 12:47-48 (ESV)

⁴⁷ If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. ⁴⁸ The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.