

All Things Are Lawful, But . . .

1 Corinthians, Vol. 9

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1 Corinthians 6:12-20

The key phrase in this passage is **All things are lawful for me**. It occurs twice in this verse, and shows up again in 10:23, without the “for me.” Paul quotes the phrase like a motto, in order to put it in the proper perspective.

All things are lawful for me is a particularly Christian statement in one important sense. All other religions prescribe rules which must be kept for a person to have a chance to be saved. They are all systems of gaining righteousness and holiness through human effort. Christianity is unique. It is a matter of salvation by **divine accomplishment** rather than by human effort. Every other religious system says **You must DO**. The Bible says **God has DONE it**.

Like any pithy statement, **All things are lawful for me** is subject to being misinterpreted.

The truth: We are free from needing to keep religious laws and rituals in order to be saved or to stay saved

The error: Extrapolating to antinomianism (lawlessness), using your freedom to justify sinning or to fail to pursue God's best

Against the backdrop that **all things are lawful**, Paul gives **two limits** that should be placed on all our (lawful) activities and **four reasons** to hate and avoid sin.

I. **Limit of Lawful #1: Profitableness** (12a)

1 Corinthians 6:12a: *All things are lawful for me, but **not all things are profitable**.*

profitable is from the Greek *sumpherō*. It literally means *to bring together*, in the sense of having an advantage, or gaining something or making profitable.

Deciding what is profitable and what is not, or what is more profitable compared to an alternative, isn't always simple. That's why people tend toward either legalism or license. Legalism legislates everything so there is no question left unanswered. License ignores the moral guidance of Scripture and leaves out the work of the Holy Spirit.

II. **Limit of Lawful #2: Powerfulness** (12b)

1 Corinthians 6:12b: *All things are lawful for me, but **I will not be mastered by anything**.*

be mastered is a good translation, but there's a clever play on words in the Greek that makes the point ever stronger than our English translation. It says literally, “*All things are within my power, but I will not be brought under the power of anything.*”

Anything which becomes your master is something which violates this principle of liberty in Christ.

Sidebar: “All things are lawful” occurs in one more verse:

1 Corinthians 10:23: *All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but **not all things edify**.*

edify means *to build up* toward maturity in Christ.

Ask 4 questions before you act or speak:

1. **Does God's word** _____ **?**
2. **Is it** _____ **?**
3. **Has it** _____ **?**
4. **Does it** _____ **?**

In the next paragraph Paul weaves together **four reasons not to sin**.

III. **Reason #1: Sinning Misuses Your Body (13-14)**

1 Corinthians 6:13: *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.*

Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food was probably another slogan or motto similar to *all things are lawful*. True, and subject to abuse. The **truth** in the slogan is that food is suited for the body and the body is suited for food. They go together like horse and carriage or love and marriage. There's even a theological aspect of food revealed in the Bible.

Two passages round out this point:

Acts 10:9-16

1 Timothy 4:1-5

Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. One of Satan's lies, popular in Corinth and still popular today, is that sex is a natural function *just like eating*, and therefore perfectly normal and reasonable and should not be restrained. The lie continues that people who limit sexual expression are just hung up on rules and self-righteousness.

1 Corinthians 6:14: *Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power.*

The analogy is, food is for the body and the body for food, and **destruction** is the destiny of both. The body is for the Lord's use, and the Lord is for the body, and **resurrection** is the destiny of the both. Christ has been resurrected and you will be resurrected.

IV. Reason #2: Sinning Degrades Christ (15-17)

1 Corinthians 6:15: *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!*

Members is customarily used for parts of the body.

May it never be! is the strongest negative in the Greek of the New Testament.

prostitute describes anyone who engages in sexual activity outside of marriage, whether male or female.

1 Corinthians 6:16-17: *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." But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.*

V. Reason #3: Sinning Has Consequences (18)

What do you do when there are circumstances and images and people around you that ignite your desire for something forbidden by God?

1 Corinthians 6:18: *Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.*

The command is **flee**. The Greek present tense means that this must be your habit. Always do it. **flee** is the translation of *pheugō*, from which comes our word **fugitive**.

How is sexual sin different from other sins?

The principle: Why not sin? the long-term consequences are too high a price to pay for the fleeting gratification involved. God is the author of the principle:

Galatians 6:7: *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.*

VI. Reason #4: Sinning Ignores Redemption (19-20)

The punch line to this chapter is easy to understand. When you sin, you are acting contrary to your true identity in Christ.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20: *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? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.*

Every believer is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the whole church is a temple of the Holy Spirit. That was the emphasis back in 1 Corinthians 3:16. Here, the emphasis is on each one of us individually.

Don't oppose God's work in redeeming you. **Bought with a price** means ownership is transferred and allegiance is changed. Since you belong to God, you should obey Him such that He is pleased with your actions and you are a good advertisement for Him in the world.