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Failure to Exercise Sexual Purity
6: 12-20

Failure to exercise sexual purity DIG: In one word how would you describe the moral climate in ancient Corinth, in one sentence? What was the Corinthians' rationale for sexual freedom? How does this rationalization compare to modern-day attitudes towards sexuality? Why does God draw a line in the sand regarding sexual purity? What is the relationship between freedom and responsibility? What might be said to believers who think they are free to do as they please? Why is sexual immorality an offense to ADONAI?

REFLECT: Why is sexual intercourse outside of marriage so devastating? Why might some people bristle at the thought of accountability with another person? How does being held accountable by others help a person use his or her freedom for good? How should being united with Messiah impact how you view what you do with your body? How would you define sexual immorality? Why do you suppose Paul advocated fleeing sexual immorality instead of simply resisting it? Have you dealt with this issue in your life?

**While demanding their freedom in Messiah,
the Corinthian believers had become controlled by their own fleshly desires.**

One of the major problems in **the church** at **Corinth** was that the baby believers were dragging their worldly behaviors into **the church**. As has been said many times, the problem was not that **the church** was in **Corinth**, the problem was that **Corinth** was in **the church**! Hiring **prostitutes** was merely one of several examples.



Two Greek words dominate the present argument: ***porneia*** or **sexual** immorality, which in this context refers to **sex** for hire, and *soma* or **body**. The problem involves both words together: **the body is not meant for sexual immorality (6:13),** and **whoever engages in sexual immorality sins against his own body (6:18). *Porneia*** in the Greek culture at the time simply meant *prostitution.* The Greeks were generally ambivalent on that matter, depending in part, whether one went openly to the brothels or was more discreet and simply had an escort. The word, however, had been picked up in Hellenistic Judaism, always disapprovingly, to cover every kind of extramarital **sexual** sin, including incest **(5:1-2a)** and homosexuality. It could refer to any of these **sins**, as it does here with **prostitution**.

Paul argues that one may not **take parts of the Messiah and make them parts of a prostitute.** Apparently some men within **the Corinthian** church were going to **prostitutes** and arguing for the right to do so. This was accepted in Greek culture, but not in the church. Being people of **the Spirit**, **they** imply, had moved **them** to a higher plane, the realm of the spirit, where **they** are unaffected by behavior that had merely to do with **the body**. What a mess! Therefore, **Paul** proceeds from **his** prior concluding encouragement: **Some of you used to do these things. But you have cleansed yourselves, you have been set apart for God, you have come to be counted righteous through the power of the Lord Yeshua the Messiah and the Spirit of our God (6:11)**, to a full frontal attack on that theological justification of **theirs**. The gospel was at stake, not simply the resolution of an ethical question.[161]

Sexual Sin Harms (6:12): As with failing to **discipline** an **immoral brother (5:1-13)** and failing to resolve personal disputes **(6:1-11)**, **Paul** comes out swinging for **the Corinthians** failure to exercise **sexual** purity. **You say, “For me,**

everything is permitted" (6:12a). This was a popular proverb of the day. It probably had its source in Gnosticism, a Greek philosophy that espoused the idea of a "dualism" between **the body** and the soul. The soul was recognized as good and of **God**, but **the body** was considered bad and not from **God**. In fact, **the body** was viewed as the jail that imprisoned the spirit. This notion affected behavior in two ways. Some people decided **the body** needed to be punished, so they denied practically all of its appetites. This was called asceticism and was behind many of the monastic movements. But the more popular reaction was not to neglect **the body**, but to indulge its every appetite with the feeling that what one did with one's **body** had nothing to do with the soul or one's religion. Today, there are people who never heard of the Gnostics, but who treat **sex** as an appetite to be satisfied just as casually as the need for **food** is met by having a snack.[162]

Maybe, but not everything is helpful (6:12b). Every **sin** that a believer commits is forgiven by **Yeshua Messiah**. But no **sin** is ever right or good, and no **sin** ever produces anything right or good. **Sin** can never be worthwhile, or **helpful** (Greek: *sumphero*, meaning *profitable*). In the sense that believers have freedom **in Messiah** (see the commentary on **Romans Bu – The New Freedom in Messiah**), and are no longer under the penalty of spiritual death, yes, **everything is permitted**. But the price for doing some things is terribly high, terribly unprofitable. **Sin** always takes you further than you want to go, costs you more than you want to pay, and makes you stay longer than you wanted to stay.

The specific type of sin **Paul** is talking about here is **sexual sin**. There is hardly a **sin** that a person commits that has more built-in pitfalls, problems, and destructiveness than **sexual sin**. It has broken more marriages (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Br – Do Not Commit Adultery**), shattered more homes, caused more heartache and disease, and destroyed more lives than alcohol and drugs combined. It causes lying, stealing, cheating, and killing, as well as bitterness, hatred, slander, gossip, and unforgiveness. **For the lips of an immoral woman are as sweet as honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil (Proverbs 5:3).**[163]

Sexual sin controls (6:12c): "For me, everything is permitted"? Maybe, but as far as I am concerned, I am not going to let anything gain control over me (6:12c). Paul had the **freedom in Messiah** to do as **he** pleased but **he** refused to allow **himself** to be **controlled** by anything or anyone other than **Yeshua: For no sin will have authority over you; because you are not under legalism, but under grace** (see the commentary on **Romans Bv – The**

New Master in Messiah). **He** would not be enslaved to any habit and certainly not to any **sin**.



Practically no **sin** is more enslaving than **sexual sin**. The more it is indulged, the more it controls the indulger. It often begins with small indiscretions, which lead to greater ones and finally to flagrant **immorality**. **James** gives us some good advice when he says: **God tempts no one. Rather, each person is being tempted whenever he is being dragged off and enticed by the bait of his own desire. Then, having conceived, the desire gives birth to sin, and when sin is fully grown, it gives birth to death. Don't be deceived, my dear brothers (James 1:14-15).** When we willingly snuggle up close to **sin**, we will soon come to tolerate **it**, and then to practice **it**. Like all other **sins** that are not resisted, **sexual sins** will grow, and eventually **it** will corrupt and destroy not only the persons directly involved, but many innocent people as well. **The Corinthian** believers were no strangers to ***porneia***, and unfortunately, many of them had slipped back into it. While demanding **their freedom in Messiah**, **they** had become **controlled** by **their** own fleshly **desires**.

It is not as easy to be in control of ourselves as we sometimes think. Many people are **deceived** into thinking they are perfectly in control of their thoughts and actions, simply because they always do what they want. However, the fact is that their **desires** and passions are telling *them* what to do, and they are going along with it. They are not masters of their own **desires**, but are willing slaves! Their flesh is controlling their minds.[164]

Sexual sin perverts (6:13-14): Sexual sin not only harms and **controls**, but it also perverts. It especially perverts **God's** plan and purpose for **the bodies of His people**. A believer's **body** was created for **the Lord**; it is a member of **Messiah**, and it is **the temple of the Ruach Ha'Kodesh.** But **the Corinthians** would argue that all **bodily** functions are basically equal and irrelevant for the life of the future, "So what's the problem?" Why not "sex for the body and the body for sex," since

both sex and the body are unrelated to the life of the future. In the end, they would argue, **God will** destroy **both**.[165]

The prevailing attitude in the **Corinthian** church was, "It's my body. It's my right to choose to do with my body whatever I want (does that sound familiar?)." Using that flawed logic, the **Corinthians** were only too happy to quote a second local proverb: **"Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food" (6:13a).**They reasoned the **food** was both pleasurable and necessary. When their **stomachs** signaled hunger, **food** was taken to satisfy them. So too, they argued **sex** was both pleasurable and necessary. When their bodies signaled **sexual** desire, they needed to be satisfied. **Food** was for **the stomach**, and **sex** was for **sex**. But **Paul** drew a sharp distinction between **the stomach** and **the body**. **The body**, in this context, meant more than just the physical frame; it referred to the whole person, composed of flesh and spirit.[166]

Paul responded by saying: **You** are right in one sense; **God will put an end to both of them.** But more than that**, the bodies** of believers are destined by **ADONAI** for much more than biological functions. **Paul** had a much better proverb in mind with that statement. **The body is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. The body** is to be the instrument of **the Lord**, for **His** use and glory. **God raised up the Lord, and He will raise us up too by his power (6:13-14).** Our **bodies** are designed not only to serve in this life but in the life to come. **They** will be changed **bodies** (see the commentary on **Second Corinthians Ba – A New Creation**) – but **they** will still be our own **bodies**.[167]

So, while **sexual immorality**, like every other **sin**, is certainly forgivable, becoming a slave to our **sexual** impulses is certainly not beneficial, not for **the Corinthians**, and certainly not for us. Yet, that's exactly what happened in **Corinth**. Just as the city of **Corinth** had degenerated into a **sex**-crazed mess, so had the church. The time had come for **the** spiritual **father** of the church (see **Ay – Marks of a Spiritual Father**) to have "the talk" with his sons and daughters in the faith.[168]

The body is a member of Messiah (6:15-18): Don't you know that your bodies are parts of the Messiah? So, am I to take parts of the Messiah and make them parts of a prostitute? Heaven forbid (Hebrew: *chalilah*, meaning *that's a contradiction, it makes no sense*)**! Sexual** relations involve a union; **the man** and **the woman** become **one flesh**. The most essential meaning of the phrase **one flesh**, is **sexual** union **(Matthew 19:4-6a). Don't you know that a**

man who joins himself to a prostitute becomes physically one with her? For the TaNaKh says, "The two will become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24), but the person who is joined to the Lord is one spirit (6:15-17). The believer who commits ***porneia*** ends up getting **the Lord** involved in the act because he and **Messiah** are **one (John 14:18-23, 15:4** and **7, 17:20-23)**. Since the believer is **one** with **Him**, and he is **one** with **the prostitute**, our **Lord** is placed in an unthinkable position in **Paul's** reasoning. **Messiah** is not personally tainted with **the sin**, any more than the sunbeam that shines on a garbage dump is polluted. But **His** reputation is dirtied because of the association. Not good.[169]



Paul then draws a conclusion from everything **he** had said up to this point. **Run away from *porneia* (6:18a)The Corinthians**, when faced with **sexual immorality**, should respond as **Joseph** did – **they** should **run** (see the commentary on **Genesis Ji – Potiphar's Wife said: Come to Bed with Me! But Joseph Ran Out of the House**). This is still good advice today. **God's Word** says not just to avoid **sexual** temptations, but to run away from them. Each of us, no matter how cautious we live our lives, will face many temptations. But we ought not to underestimate their power to attract, nor should we overestimate our ability to resist. But where should we flee? Can we run away from ourselves? No! But we can relate everything in our lives to **Messiah** and find, in that relationship, a perspective from which to deal with every situation.[170]

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for **Your** gracious living in the body of those who **love You**. **Yeshua answered and said to him: If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him (John 14:23).** Praise **You** that **You** live within both Jews and Gentiles. **In Him [Messiah Yeshua] the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple for the Lord. In Him, you also are being built together into God's dwelling place in the Ruach (Ephesians 2:21-22).***

*Thank **You** for always being with **Your** children. **For God Himself has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you," (Hebrews 13:5).** It is such a comfort to know that when problems and trials come, **You** are right there with **Your** children to comfort and to guide us. Being alone in hard times makes the trial seem harder, but we are never alone for **You** are right there with us which brings us such comfort and peace. What a wonderful privilege **Your** indwelling presence is! We love **You** and desire to care for our body, **Your** temple. In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

The body is a temple of the Ruach Ha'Kodesh (6:18-20): But banning something is never **Paul's** final word. So, **he** offers further theological reasons, closely related to what has already been said. **The body . . . is for the Lord (6:13), he** had reasoned; now **he** argues that **porneia** in particular is a **sin against one's own body**, because it is also **the temple of the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**. **Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but whoever engages in sexual immorality sins against his own body (6:18b).** Commentators, have long asked how drunkenness, gluttony, suicide, and self-mutilation do not also qualify as **sins against the body**. But **Paul** is not referring to what might physically injure **the body**. **He** was talking about what would injure the whole person, mind, **body**, and spirit. **The body** is capable of becoming an instrument of wickedness or an instrument of **righteousness**; a slave of impurity or a slave of **righteousness (Romans 6:19)**; something that brings **glory to God (Philippians 1:20)**, or something that brings shame.[171]

As with all the biblical holy days, there are spiritual lessons to be learned from Hanukkah – light, courage, and faith, to name a few. Perhaps the most vital one is seen in its name. This festival commemorates a time when the true temple worship of **God** was restored in Yerushalayim. The Temple no longer stands today; it is the heart of each follower of **Yeshua Messiah** that is **the temple** where **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** dwells. But too often, believers endanger the purity of this **temple** by allowing idolatry into their lives, just as Antiochus did in the Temple of old. Hence, the timeless encouragement from **Paul**:[172]

Or don't you know that your body is a temple for the Ruach Ha'Kodesh who lives inside you, whom you received from God? The fact is, you don't belong to yourselves (6:19). As believers our bodies are not our **own**. **Paul** calls for **sexual** purity not only because of the way **sexual sin** affects **the body**, but because **the body** it affects is not even the believer's **own**. **For we are the temple of the living God (Second Corinthians 6:16).** And the fact that

believers are the dwelling place of **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** is clear in passages such as **John 7:38-39** and **20:22**; **Acts 1:8** and **Romans 8:9.**

For you were bought at a price (literally, bought and paid for)**.** The verb is in the aorist tense, which points to a single decisive action in the past. **You should be aware that the ransom paid to free you from the worthless way of life which your fathers passed on to you did not consist of anything perishable like silver or gold; on the contrary, it was the costly bloody sacrificial death of the Messiah, as of a lamb without defect or spot (First Peter 1:18-19).** Our **bodies** are **God's temple**, and a **temple** is for worship. Our **bodies**, therefore, had one supreme purpose: **to glorify God (6:20).**