

# 1 Corinthians 6:9–20

*A Ministry in the Word*

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## Scripture Reading

*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Meat for the belly, and the belly for meats; but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.*

*And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power. Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid. What, know ye not that he which is joined to a harlot is one body? For two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.*

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**Washed, Sanctified, Justified**

Those who have experienced the good of the washing, sanctification, and justification spoken of in verse 11 stand in Christian liberty. They have been freed from the bondage of unrighteousness listed in verses 9 and 10. And it is from that standing that the apostle speaks in verse 12: *All things are lawful unto me.*

This speaks of all those things that were ceremonially restricted to the children of Israel under the law — things that are now, in Christ, fully free. The vision shown to Peter, with its call to rise and eat, was the great clearing of those restrictions. And in connection with the Gentiles, Peter had to learn that what God has cleansed, he is not to call unclean. Liberty of conscience was the result.

But liberty and licence are two entirely different things. Christian liberty is freedom from slavery to our own will — and freedom *to* do God's will. Not freedom to do the flesh's will under a Christian cover. That is an altogether wrong thought, and far too common. The passage before us is altogether against it.

### **Lawful, Expedient, and Not Under the Power of Any**

*All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.* One understanding of *lawful* here is that nothing — no created thing — could sever the relationship to God that has been established in Christ. Nothing can make one no longer a child of God. But there are plenty of things that could spoil the walk, or hinder usefulness to Him, or prevent the glorifying of God in the body. Lots of things can get in the way practically, while nothing actually destroys the relationship Christ has put us into.

So the question is not merely what is lawful, but what is profitable — what is expedient. And beyond that: am I being brought under the power of this thing? If something has power over me, that is a denial of His lordship. There is one Lord. And if I am brought under the power of anything — however lawful in itself —

that is, as far as it goes, a practical denial of the lordship of Christ.

*Meat for the belly, and the belly for meats; but God shall destroy both it and them.* The present order will come to an end. Our present body either dies before the Lord comes, or when He comes it will be transformed — changed into a body of glory. The present constitution of things is temporary. That puts natural appetites in their proper place.

### **Lord and Christ — A Distinction Worth Noting**

The body is not for fornication, but for the Lord — and the Lord for the body. His title as Lord brings before us His rights over us. As Christians we really have no rights of our own. He has all the rights. And the Lord for the body: He is the real governor of it, the one who has authority over it. That is something easily forgotten.

It is worth observing the distinction between the titles Lord and Christ throughout the New Testament. The lordship of Christ has to do with the individual. Christ has to do with the community — the Head and His body. We read of members of Christ, not members of the Lord. We read of Christ's name — because there it is a question of His authority being owned. The same person, but the aspect being expressed is expressed appropriately by one title or the other, depending on what is in view.

One hears Baptists speak of the Lord's church — but that expression does not appear in Scripture. Equally, some of the Reformed speak of Christ as king of the church. He is neither lord of the church nor king of the church. He is head of the church, and lord of the individual. *Jesus Christ is Lord of all* — not king of all. The church does not stand in relation to Him as subjects to a king. These distinctions matter. It is by replacing one title with another and treating them as interchangeable that man builds his systems of theology and introduces confusion.

## Members of Christ

*Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?* This follows from verse 14 — that God will raise up these bodies by His own power. That being so, these bodies belong to Christ now. Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid — or more precisely, as the Greek expresses it, *far be the thought*.

In Ephesians 5:30, this union is expressed even more deeply: *We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones*. It is a most intimate thing, and it subsists eternally. It will never change. There is not the slightest ground to think that in the eternal state the Old Testament saints will somehow be incorporated into the church, or that millennial saints will be. Ephesians 3 tells us that to Him be glory in the assembly to the ages of ages. The church is eternally distinct. That portion in Christ is distinct now and will be eternally maintained.

In 1 Corinthians 12, we read: *For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many are one body, so also is the Christ*. So it is characteristic of what God has made in making the Christ, that He should have members. The Christ — the head in union with all the members — is looked at as one. And chapter 12 tells us how it was brought about: by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body.

## One Flesh and One Spirit — The Vital Distinction

He that is joined to a harlot is one body — for the Scripture says, *the two shall be one flesh*. That is a tie, and an unholy one for a professed Christian. But the contrast is everything: *he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit*. And that Spirit should bear a capital S — this is the Spirit of God, as at the end of verse 11: *by the Spirit of our God*.

The distinction between one flesh and one spirit is of the greatest importance. In earthly unions between men and women, death ends the tie — as we read in Romans: marriage is ended by death. *The two shall be one flesh* — and that is what death breaks. But death does not break what we have in verse 17. We are joined to the Lord, one spirit — and that union is eternal. Whether we are alive in the body now, or our body lies in the grave while we are with the Lord, or we are in the resurrection state — what is said in verse 17 does not change. None of those things touch it. Once this relationship has been established, it is established forever.

There is much romanticising talk about marriage as a union of spirits, or a union of souls. Scripture does not speak that way. The marriage bond is one of flesh, and death breaks it. What we have in verse 17 is of a different order altogether — of immeasurably greater dignity, and imperishable. Down here, marriages are broken by death one after another, across nearly two thousand years of Christian history. But one union is maintained through all of it, unbroken: he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.

## **The Seal and the Union**

We are sealed by the Holy Spirit — and that sealing is for the day of redemption, not *unto* the day of redemption, as some translations render it. The preposition implies it is for that day as one of its objects, not that the sealing will then come to an end. We are sealed, and that seal does not end. Mr. Darby's translation, uniquely dispensationally informed, gives this rightly. We are never going to be unsealed. That is what it means to be sealed.

The Holy Spirit indwells the church — He formed it by His corporate indwelling — and that will subsist for eternity. And because the Spirit will never depart from us, the joining spoken of in verse 17 will never come apart. This cannot be read back into the Old Testament — there was no seal of the Spirit then, no uniting to

the Spirit in that sense. Nor can it be carried forward into the millennium and applied to saints of another epoch. This is a uniquely Christian matter. We are connected with the Lord — joined to the One who came here, died for us, was raised, and is now at the right hand of God.

## **Flee Fornication**

*Flee fornication.* In chapter 10 the word is *flee idolatry*. There are things a Christian does need to flee. Joseph gives us the excellent example of what it is to flee fornication when Potiphar's wife tried to lay hold on him. He suffered for it — he was cast into prison. And yet the wonderful thing is how through all of that he becomes a type of the Lord Jesus in every aspect, finally exalted to rule over all Egypt. A beautiful foreshadowing of the Lord who suffered and was exalted to rule over all.

*Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.* This is a verse that requires care to understand. It does not say that sinning against one's own body is the only thing true of this sin — or the worst thing true of it. Joseph's word puts the greater aspect before us: *How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?* But the apostle is here bringing out something unique about this particular sin — that it touches the body in a way other sins do not. It is singled out in that respect.

## **The Body as Temple of the Holy Spirit**

In chapter 3:16 we read: *Know ye not that ye are temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?* That is the assembly — the saints together have temple character because of the indwelling Spirit. Darby puts the indefinite article there: *ye are temple of God* — not *the* temple, because if every local assembly were the temple, there would be a whole pile of temples. There is only one temple, one bride, one assembly in that sense. The saints collectively have that temple

character.

Here in verse 19, the individual is in view: *Know ye not that your body is temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you?* Again Darby omits the definite article — *temple*, not *the temple*. The individual believer's body has temple character because the Holy Spirit indwells him. The temple was God's dwelling place among men — the means by which He was present in the midst. Here, our body is that dwelling place, that means of His presence and testimony to those outside.

It should not be concluded from this that if the body dies, our connection with the Holy Spirit is severed. That is not the point. We are joined to the Lord as one spirit — and that does not depend on the body. But while we are here in the body, the body has this temple character, and our practice should answer to it. *Which ye have of God* — we did not seal ourselves. The sealing is an act of God.

### **Bought With a Price — Seven Features Building to a Conclusion**

The apostle has been building a complete case, leaving no loopholes. Seven features bear on the conclusion. First, the character of the unrighteous and what they cannot inherit. Second, the washing, sanctification, and justification of those who have believed. Third, the body is not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. Fourth, the body will be raised by God's own power. Fifth, our bodies are members of Christ. Sixth, he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit, and the body has temple character. And seventh — the conclusion: *ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body*.

*Ye are not your own*. Was ever a human being truly his own? Not even Adam, in innocence, could be said to belong to himself. And the lost person is not their own either, though they like to think so — they are held captive by sin and by the enemy. The whole world lies in the wicked one. But for us, the position is utterly different and immeasurably better: we are Christ's. We are His freedmen and His bondmen at once — freed from bondage to the old world system, and bonded to

Him. As one has said, when you serve yourself, you serve a tyrant. It is never satisfying. How much better to be His.

The incarnation has greatly dignified the body. The Son of God took humanity into His person — and that is an amazing thing. He never suffered that body to see corruption, for He is the Holy One and it was His body. And because of all that He is, and all that He has done, the conclusion stands: *Glorify God in your body*. What a high calling that is — and what a sufficient reason for everything that has been set out in these verses.

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— *Study ends* —