

Bought with a Price

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

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This morning I want to focus on two verses at the end of 1 Corinthians 6—verses 19-20.

While you are turning there, let me quickly review the context for you. Paul is six chapters into this epistle. Almost from start to finish, 1 Corinthians focuses on various problems in the Corinthian church. And some of these were serious problems. The church was divided; they were tolerant of gross sins they should have purged from their midst, including a case of incest (mentioned in chapter 5). They had people making a mockery of the Lord's table, treating it like one of the drunken celebrations that characterized Roman religions. Their corporate meetings were chaotic. False teachings were beginning to come in. And Paul deals with all those things in 1 Corinthians.

Our text comes at a point where Paul is dealing in particular with sins of the flesh. All of Chapter 5 is a rebuke because the church was tolerating this case of open sexual immorality "of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans," according to 5:1. This man was apparently cohabiting with his father's wife. It's not clear whether that was his mother or step-mother, but either way, it was gross sin, and Paul instructs them to excommunicate the man for the sake of purity in the church. Keep this incestuous man's situation in mind, because it's an important part of the immediate context of our text, and we'll return to it.

But then at the start of chapter 6, Paul turns to the problem of believers in the Corinthian assembly who were taking other Christians to court—another very fleshly kind of sin. Remember, this was a severely divided church, and we know that, because Paul deals with the problem of factiousness repeatedly in the first three or four chapters. Here at the start of chapter 6, he gives us some clear insight into how deep-seated and contentious the division had become. Apparently, some people in the Corinthian assembly had enlisted the help of the secular courts to settle their disagreements.

That, again, is a *fleshly* sin. Paul said so in chapter 3, verse 3: "You are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?" Divisiveness is as fleshly as fornication—especially when it is expressed in the kind of contentiousness that refuses to settle differences in a godly fashion. The egocentric, self-gratifying, carnal motives that cause people to fornicate are the same kinds of motives that cause them to nurture personal differences to the point of taking a brother to court. Paul says here in chapter 6, verse 7 that it's better to be defrauded than to bring the gospel into disrepute by dragging a fellow-Christian into court. Verse 7: "To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?"

And while he's on the subject of fleshly, ego-driven, self-centered sinning, he names a short list of such sins, saying these things are not to be characteristic of Christians (verses 9-10): "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually

immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God."

By the way, why do you suppose idolatry is in that list? Sexual immorality, adultery, and homosexuality, drunkenness, and even thievery and swindling are pretty obviously immoral in fleshly ways. But in the middle of that list, Paul includes idolatry. Why?

Any Corinthian would have understood that. The main characteristic of Corinthian idolatry was fleshly immorality. They had made prostitution into a religious sacrament, and the prostitutes were also the priestesses in most of the temples of that city. So this was a list of the main sins that characterized Corinthian culture.

Some of you *used* to be like that, Paul says in verse 11, "But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." Don't follow the culture or adapt to it; stand apart from it. You're different now. That's what sanctification is all about.

Then in the verses leading into our text, Paul gives several reasons why those fleshly sins—especially all the various forms of fornication—are such gross evils. They promise pleasure, but what they actually deliver is pollution—defilement of the worst kind. Think about this: fornication is utterly irrational. It's motivated by selfishness and a desire for freedom and self-gratification, and yet instead of freedom it brings enslavement (v. 12); and instead of self-gratification, it is nothing less than a form of wanton self-destruction (v. 13). It is uniquely a sin against one's own body (v. 18).

And that leads into our text, verses 19-20: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."

The whole chapter is incredibly rich and powerful. By the time Paul is finished, it's easy to see why these sins of the flesh carry such a unique stigma. The shame and the dishonor most cultures attach to sins of fornication is well-deserved. And though our culture has been trying for decades to remove the stigma of all the sins Paul lists in verse 9 ("the sexually immoral . . . idolaters . . . adulterers . . . men who practice homosexuality"—and a host of related sins) those sins incur horrific shame—even in the eyes of pagans (according to 1 Corinthians 5:1).

Nothing short of permanently searing and totally silencing the human conscience will ever completely erase the disgrace we associate with those sins. And Paul stresses the dishonor these sins bring on whoever indulges in them. He says the shame attached to such sins is appropriate. In fact, the shamefulness of those sins is a strong motive for avoiding them.

But there are even more powerful reasons to abstain from sins of the flesh, and that's what we are going to focus on in verses 19-20.

Those two verses are full of biblical themes, and some of the most important themes in Scripture, starting with the doctrine of the atonement. But there's so much here. I can think of four or five ways a good preacher might approach verses 19-20. I think I could preach a five-week series on these two verses alone and still not exhaust the main truths

and doctrines that it touches on. If we had that much time to spend on it, I would do one whole message on the idea that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. That's the doctrine of the Holy Spirit's indwelling residency in every Christian. Think of it: We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit! That's an amazing truth—more than enough for a whole sermon by itself.

But then I'd want to do another message on what it means to be a temple; I'd show you how this verse relates to 1 Corinthians 3:16, which speaks of Christians collectively—the whole church—as the temple of the Holy Spirit. This verse, of course, by contrast, says individual Christians are temples and their very bodies are like the holy of holies in the original temple. Paul makes that point here to stress the holiness of our bodies and the importance of not defiling them. The argument essentially means that for a Christian, the sin of fornication is an especially wicked act, because it's not merely a sin against our body (as he says in verse 18); it's also a desecration of God's temple, and therefore an act of high blasphemy. That point would fill at least one whole sermon, maybe more.

I'd do a third message on the doctrine of the atonement—how Christ's atoning work was a payment that not only bought propitiation for your sin but also purchased you as an individual to be the unique possession of God. We'd take another look at the issue of substitutionary atonement and I'd show you how this phrase in verse 20 ("you were bought with a price") demolishes every kind of liberal, weak, and pietistic variety of Christianity. (That's one of the things we touched on last

week, when we studied Isaiah 53 and the principle of substitutionary atonement).

Then I would do a fourth message on this phrase at the end of verse 19—"You are not your own." I'd show you how God has a claim on us as our creator and as the sovereign of the universe, because (in the words of Psalm 100:3, "It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves." And in the words of Proverbs 16:4: "The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, Even the wicked for the day of evil." So God has an unassailable claim of ownership on us because He *made* us. And yet, the apostle Paul looks beyond that and appeals to an even higher principle, which he fetches from the doctrine of the atonement: "You are not your own, for you were bought with a price."

I'd want to show you what this ownership entails. It means we are precious to the Lord, because of the price He paid to redeem us. It also means we are his bondservants—obligated to obey Him. In other words, this speaks of the kind of ownership that is associated with slavery. Having redeemed us from slavery to sin, He is now our true Master. As Paul says in Romans 6:18, "Having been set free from sin, [you] have become slaves of righteousness."

And then I would do a *fifth* message that shows how the entire sacrificial system of the Old Testament is fulfilled and explained in the truth of this passage. Your body is the temple; it's the holy of holies in which God dwells; it's also the only reasonable and true sacrifice of thanksgiving, as we learn in Romans 12:1: "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." So

true worship involves the devotion of the body to God in holiness and honor. "Therefore glorify God in your body."

And after five complete sermons on this text, we still would not have exhausted it completely. So this morning, I want to preach a *sixth* message on this passage and take a broad, practical look at how all those truths ought to impact the way we live and the way we think. I want to show you why it's here in this context and how it applied to what the apostle Paul was trying to get the Corinthian believers to grasp.

And, truthfully, if we had the time, I would want to do at least *four* sermons just on the practical ramifications of this verse. We know from 2 Timothy 3:16 that "All scripture is . . . profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." There are a host of practical lessons contained in the doctrine taught by these two verses. Again, the doctrine of the atonement and the doctrine of the indwelling Holy Spirit are two of the main arguments Paul appeals to as practical reasons to glorify God in your body.

There's also a lot of practical wisdom in the correction contained here. Paul wrote this whole epistle to correct the abuses that were occurring in the Corinthian church. They were beset with problems. They were arrogant. That sectarian spirit they had fostered had all but destroyed their unity. That was the reason for the lawsuits against one another; it was the reason their worship services were so disorderly. They were playing a game of spiritual one-upmanship, abusing their spiritual gifts and tolerating chaos and carnal behavior in the worship services, because they all wanted to manifest some gift more spectacular than

everyone else. They wanted to be first in line and eat the most in those corporate meals that were originally referred to as "love-feasts." But the Corinthians were so lacking in brotherly love that their love-feasts had the look and feel of drunken food fights. (Listen to Paul's description of that in 1 Corinthians 11:20-22: "When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing.") On top of that, they were tolerating gross sexual sin, including at least one very public case of incest.

And notice this: the two verses we're focusing on contain principles that correct every one of those problems.

This passage is also a great text from which to draw positive practical principles for instruction in righteousness. "Glorify God in your body," it says. Both the immediate context and the broader context of the whole epistle are filled with practical ways to do that. Verse 18: "Flee fornication." Verse 12: avoid the kind of bondage that fleshly appetites and carnal lusts tend to draw us into. Verse 19: refrain from anything that defiles the temple of God.

So there's doctrine, there's correction, and there's instruction in righteousness. I hope you see that we could deal with these two verses for weeks on end and still not exhaust all that could be said about it. But this morning what I want to focus on is the way this text rebukes and reproves us. Remember that Scripture "is *profitable* for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." Don't think of the reproofs and corrections in God's Word as negative things. They are *profitable*.

They are necessary. Sometimes the most practical and relevant aspects of what the Bible is saying to us are contained in the rebukes.

That's what Hebrews 4:12 means when it says God's word is sharper than any two-edged sword. It cuts, and it cuts deep and precisely—and sometimes the cutting is painful. But it's also practical and profitable, and that is the case with our text for this week.

But remember, the immediate context is all about *fleshly* sins, and as you might expect, that is the main focus of this text. It reprovcs and rebukes the sort of fleshly sins we are all prone to in our fallen weakness. We barely have time to scratch the surface of this verse, but I want to point out to you three particular sins that this passage confronts and rebukes head on. Are you ready to write? because I want you to get these.

First of all—

1. IT REBUKES SEXUAL IMMORALITY

This is the most obvious and immediate issue Paul is dealing with in this context. Remember, fornication and other forms of sexual sin were huge problems in the Corinthian culture, and the sins of the culture were infecting the church.

In fact, let's look a little more closely at what the Corinthian culture was like. Corinth was a large city directly west of Athens on a narrow isthmus of land that connects the mainland of Greece to that large body of land in the south of Greece called the Peloponnesus. The isthmus is only a few miles wide, and on one side is the Aegean sea; on the other side is the Adriatic. Nowadays

there's a deep canal near Corinth that allows ships to pass, but even before the canal was built the strip of land was narrow enough that ships could actually be brought ashore and put on rollers and transported to the other side. This was often done, because the journey around the south of Greece was treacherous, and you could save a lot of time and avoid a lot of danger by simply hauling your ship across the land.

So Corinth was situated at a strategic place, between two key seaports. It was a resort town, always crowded and always busy, always filled with travelers, and it developed a reputation for debauchery.

The chief attractions in Corinth were these pagan temples that were served by prostitutes. There were several of them. So the city was filled with *brothels*—you can see them to this day, row after row of religious bordellos, in the ruins of ancient Corinth. The pagan religions of the Greek and Roman world had made fornication into a religious sacrament, and Corinth was the focal point for that kind of worship. It had become so deeply ingrained in the Corinthian culture that in the first century, "to Corinthianize" was a synonym for sexual immorality. I've told you before that Corinth was to the first-century Mediterranean culture what Las Vegas is to our culture today—except that the chief attractions were temples rather than casinos. And people justified their debauchery by making it into a religious ceremony.

That was a great place to plant a church, right? "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." So that's what the apostle Paul did. Acts 18 tells the story of how that church

was founded. When Paul came to Corinth, he met Priscilla and Aquila, and they happened to be craftsmen who were skilled in the same craft as the apostle Paul. They were tentmakers. So Paul stayed in their home, worked alongside them during the week, and then every Sabbath, he would go with them to the synagogue and preach the gospel.

And when the Jews refused his teaching, Paul said (Acts 18:6): "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles." And he moved in with a Gentile named Justus who lived right next door to the synagogue, and Paul just kept preaching the gospel. People began to respond, including "Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue . . . [and] all his house" (Acts 18:8). And Corinth was where the Lord spoke to the apostle Paul in a vision in the night and said, "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city." So Paul stayed there a year and a half, and that is how this church was founded.

But when Paul moved on, these problems developed in the church. And at the heart of all their problems was the Corinthians' tendency to let the values of that debauched culture seep into the church. That's something for today's church-growth experts to consider: cultural assimilation is not a good strategy for the church in a pagan culture. *Especially* in a city filled with brothels, the worst thing the church could do would be to take a lax attitude toward sexual sin.

Now, remember: According to Acts 18, virtually the whole Jewish community in Corinth rejected the gospel. So

the church was made up of mostly Gentiles who, of course, came from a culture that was not inclined to see sexual sin as unspiritual. That may explain somewhat *why* they would receive into their membership this man who was fornicating with his father's wife. Perhaps they thought they could connect with their culture better or seem really cool if they casually accepted this guy's sin. In fact, it seems clear that some of the people in the Corinthian church wore their extreme tolerance like a badge of honor. Verse 2 says they were puffed up. They actually took some sort of perverse pride in their liberality towards such a grossly immoral act.

Not only was this guy's incest a supremely immoral and deeply shameful sin; it wasn't *really* impressing even the most immoral people in the Corinthian culture. Incest was a sin that even shocked the grossest pagans of Corinth. Paul wasn't gentle in this rebuke. He ordered them to excommunicate the man.

Notice: Paul wasn't impressed with how sophisticated and missional they were. In fact, I can't stress this enough: Paul *never* encouraged the Corinthians to blend into their culture by adopting an easygoing familiarity with sexual sin or an extra-tolerant attitude. On the contrary, he always *stressed* the importance of avoiding such sin. (In fact, that verb "avoid" is mild compared to what Paul actually told them.) Verse 18: "Flee from sexual immorality."

But first he hammers them with several reasons why fornication is such an unholy, degrading, defiling sin. He gives several reasons:

Verse 13: it's a corruption of the purpose for which God made our bodies. "The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord." Fornication takes that which ought to be holy, that which was made uniquely in the image of God (with the express purpose of honoring Him), and puts it to an unholy use instead. That's wrong because (he says) "the body is . . . for the Lord." That is the main thought and the central thread of this whole section. That thought leads up to our passage and runs right through it. Hang onto it. Paul will come back to it. But he's not finished.

In verses 15-17, he gives a second reason why fornication is such a serious sin: it defiles our spiritual union with Christ. "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! 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." But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him."

Do the math, he says. If you are one with Christ in an intimate spiritual union, and then through an act of fornication you become one flesh with a harlot in an intimate fleshly union, you have in effect defiled the body of Christ.

A couple of things to notice about this: First, our union with Christ is so perfect and so complete that it encompasses our whole person. It's not limited to our spirit only apart from our flesh. The whole person, both body and spirit, are in mystical union with Christ.

Paul here stands in contrast to the Gnostics, who taught that spirit is good and matter is evil. So, the pseudo-Christian gnostics taught, the Spirit is redeemed,

and made holy, and united with Christ, but the body is unredeemed and completely unholy and fit only for ultimate destruction. *They* said you could sin in the body without defiling your spirit.

Here Paul teaches otherwise. Notice that he doesn't say the body is evil. Just the opposite. His whole point is that the body is made for a *holy* purpose: to glorify God. Verse 14: "God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power." Christ rose bodily, and our bodies will also be raised and glorified in physical form. So there's nothing *inherently* unholy about the body.

On the contrary, look again at verse 13: "the body is . . . for the Lord; and the Lord for the body." God is not *against* the body; he is for it. He created it; and He is the one who made our bodies so that they are capable of enjoying pleasure. There's nothing wrong with that pleasure. It's a holy pleasure—as long as it is a fulfillment of, and not a corruption of, God's purposes. In fact, in verse 16, Paul is alluding to Genesis 2:24, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." *That is God's purpose for men and women.* That physical union. in the context of lifelong marriage—the union of two partners devoted to one another above all others—is a holy pleasure. God designed it for our pleasure. It's holy and honorable within the marriage relationship, and according to Hebrews 13:4, "the marriage bed [is] undefiled."

But that same verse in Hebrews 13 says, "God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous." Paul says the same thing in verses 9-10 of our chapter. Neither "fornicators . . . nor

adulterers . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God." And those who defile their union with Christ by committing sins of sexual immorality are guilty of an abominable offense against Christ and (v. 18) "against his own body." In other words, fornication is a unique and especially defiling sin, because it dishonors our holy union with Christ.

But Paul is not finished. In verse 19 (this is where our passage starts) he says such sins of the body also defile the Temple of the Holy Spirit. Your body is the dwelling-place of the Spirit of God, and therefore for a Christian to desecrate the body is to profane a holy temple.

Now, put all this together. You want to know why fornication has always been regarded as a particularly heinous sin? Because it involves personal and direct transgressions against each Member of the Trinity. It debases and dishonors the body, which (v. 13) is "for the Lord." God created it for His purposes. and to use it for any other purpose—especially a purpose as evil as an act of fornication—is a sin against God the Father. It's a sin against Christ as well (v. 15), because it takes our members, which are Christ's by union with Him, and joins them to a harlot, defiling our holy union with Christ. And it's a sin against the Holy Spirit (v. 19), because it desecrates the temple in which He dwells.

And notice Paul's counsel to the Corinthians. He doesn't urge them to get into a recovery program for sexual addicts. He doesn't suggest that they get therapy. He just tells them to stop it.

No, actually, it's even more urgent than that (v. 18): "Flee fornication." Run from it. Avoid any and all temptations to it. Direct your feet, and your eyes, and your ears, and

your thoughts to other things. This is a sin to flee. "Other vices may be conquered in fight; this one can be conquered only by flight."

In Solomon's words (Proverbs 5:8), "Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house." Scripture says we should flee even the *thought* of adultery. Second Timothy 2:22: "Flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart." First Peter 2:11 says "fleshly lusts . . . [wage] war against the soul." Flee them. Abstain from them completely.

And notice: Here in our passage Paul finds the highest reason to avoid fornication in the atonement: "You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body"

So that's the context and the central thrust of our passage. That's Paul's main point and the foremost reason why he wrote this. It is straightforward, deliberate rebuke of every form of sexual immorality.

Now, as we look a little more closely this verse, we're going to see some implications that go even further than that. Sexual immorality is Paul's *chief* concern, but it is by no means his *only* concern. Here's a second sin that this verse rebukes:

2. IT REBUKES SECULARISM

Secularism, as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, is "the belief that religion and religious considerations should be deliberately omitted from temporal affairs." Secularism is the notion that God can safely be kept away from certain portions of our lives and excluded from some of our activities.

Paul says, no. "Glorify God in your body." That command covers everything we do as long as we inhabit our bodies. And it's important, because the Holy Spirit inhabits these bodies, too. He's there no matter what we do, so everything we do should honor him. There is no secular, non-religious aspect to the Christian life—including something as mundane as eating and drinking. First Corinthians 10:31: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

Incidentally, secularism is one of the core beliefs that drives our modern culture. Our nation's highest courts and our federal and state legislatures have for the past fifty years or longer been on a campaign to eliminate religion from public life. They want to keep Christ out of the workplace and silence every reference to God in the civic arena.

Now, please understand, I'm not at all concerned with the *politics* of this. I'm not trying to organize a campaign to bring prayer back to the public schools, and I wouldn't do that anyway. Frankly, when you consider what kinds of people are setting the educational agenda of most government-sponsored schools, and when you realize what kind of ideas they are indoctrinating children with, I'm happy not to have them teaching kids to pray.

So it's not the politics, but the philosophy that concerns me. God is being consigned and relegated to a secondary and subservient role in modern life. People trot their religion out only when they absolutely have to. That's a kind of paganism. Although it's called *secularism*, and we think of it as something antithetical to religion, it's really a standard brand of pagan religion. In fact, it's the most thorough kind of paganism. Paganism *always* has this secularizing effect. The pagan invents a god whose purpose is to serve humanity, rather than vice versa. And as humanity becomes more and more sophisticated, the secular god gets a smaller and smaller role. It's where all paganism has always been headed: toward the elimination of God from temporal life.

That type of thinking dominates Western culture today. We live in a secular culture. As Christians, we instinctively recoil against encroaching secularism. But you know what? Most Christians I know have absorbed a shocking degree of secularism from the culture around us. I'm ashamed to say it, but right here at Grace Church there are plenty of people whose Christianity is relegated to an hour or two on Sunday, and the rest of the week they give little thought to Christ or His Word.

In fact, let's be honest: For *most* of us, there's a tendency to forget that Christ is all, and in all. And we go about certain activities of life with no thought of God. We tend to divide our lives into the sacred and the secular, just like the world does. That is not a biblical way of thinking. I already quoted 1 Corinthians 10:31: "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.." There's also

Colossians 3:17: "whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." And just a few verses later (Col. 3:23) he adds: "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men." For the Christian, every activity of life is an occasion for worship and an opportunity to glorify God.

Spurgeon said he could smoke a cigar to the glory of God. When that remark was published in the London *Daily Telegraph*, he admitted he didn't like the way it sounded, "But," he said, "in the sense in which I employed it I still stand to it. No Christian should do anything in which he cannot glorify God; and this may be done, according to Scripture, in eating and drinking and the common actions of life."

Our text makes that very point in a striking way by reminding us that our bodies are temples. "No matter where you go, // there you are." And wherever you are is a holy place, because you *are* a temple. That rebukes and destroys the secularist perspective.

I have to keep moving, even though I would love to camp on this point. Perhaps someday I'll do a whole message on this subject of the sin of secular living. But that's enough to make the point clear: if your body is a temple, then everything you do ought to be done as an act of worship.

So this passage rebukes sexual immorality; it rebukes secularism. And finally,

3. IT REBUKES SELFISHNESS

Again, there's enough fodder here for a whole sermon on this subject. All of these issues are closely related. Sexual immorality is one of the most selfish of all sins, because it's all about the gratification of individual lust. And that's why Paul's argument against sexual immorality is also an argument against the sins of selfishness, self-centeredness, self-sufficiency, self-righteousness—and every kind of selfishness.

"You are not your own." *Don't you know that?* Paul asks. He might as well be writing to the average person in 21st-century America. Selfishness is one of the characteristic sins of our society, and the average person doesn't even have a clue there's anything wrong with it. Like the people in Psalm 12:4, who said, "With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?"

But for the *Christian*, selfishness is totally out of place and inexcusable. We are not our own. We belong to the Holy Spirit, as His temples. We were bought and paid for by the precious blood of Christ, and therefore we are not our own. Paul uses this same argument in Romans 14:7-9, where he writes,

For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself.

8 For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.

9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

Christ paid a redemption price for us, and therefore, we are God's own possession in every sense.

Back to something I said earlier: On the one hand, this means we are slaves to God—servants of the Lord who are owned as His outright possessions. Christ has ransomed us from the harsh prison-house of sin, but according to Romans 6:22, "now that [we] have been set free from sin [we] have become slaves of God."

Now, there's a liberty in that servanthood. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." But it's not an *absolute* freedom. It's freedom from the bondage of sin, but it is accomplished by a different kind of servitude. Romans 6:20: "For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness." But now that we are free from sin, we are slaves of righteousness. As 1 Peter 2:16 says, we live "as free . . . not using [our] liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as [slaves] of God."

A slave has no right to be selfish, ever. You are not your own. You were bought with a price. So on the one hand, this means we are slaves to God.

On the other hand, it also speaks of an elevation of our status. We have become God's precious and treasured possessions. If you are a believer in Christ, you are not a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction. You're a vessel of honor fit for the Master's use—*honor*, not *dishonor*.

The proof that God values you highly is the fact that he paid so dear a price to get you. First Peter 1:18: "You [know that you] were ransomed . . . not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot."

You are of great worth to God—not because of any inherent self-worth, but because God has set His eternal

love on you. What is the measure of your worth? Well, you are a temple of the Holy Spirit—His dwelling-place.

If we understood what that means, we would never give our bodies to uncleanness, immorality, drunkenness, or other fleshly sins. We need to live in a way that reflects how precious we are in God's sight. And the way to do that is to renounce all forms of selfishness and the sin that is bred in a selfish heart, and give ourselves to the purpose for which God made us and redeemed us. In the words of our text, "Glorify God in your body." "Yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness." "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." And "whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."