

Do you not Know? 1 Cor. 6:12-20

Sex in the city – free to do anything v. 12

1 Corinthians 6:12 “Everything is permissible for me,” but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible for me,” but I will not be mastered by anything.

In Roman Corinth

Who would own that slogan, ‘all things are permissible for me’ – I am free to do anything, at least as it relates to sexual expression, for that is the context here

Although it is also an attitude to life seen in relation to eating food sacrificed to idols [10:23], even in idol temples

Answer in Roman Corinth is men – not women, free men of a certain class, not slaves

and as we look at what was permitted free men in Corinth we see that the issue goes well beyond what we might consider prostitution v. 15, men visiting brothels – although this is included and could be visited without stigma

At the heart of social life for Roman men after they had reached the age of maturity, had taken on what was called the toga virilis at about the age of 18 years, were banquets, either as social occasions or as part of the activity of idol temples.

These banquets involved eating and drinking – and ‘promiscuous after dinners’ – where sexual activity was not only permitted but encouraged – with slaves, or prostitutes brought in for the occasion, or even higher class courtesans.

These ‘after dinners’ were not open to wives, whose sexual life was very strictly governed. Wives were meant to be virgins when married, and chaste, devoted to their husband, within marriage.

So these men were free to have what we might call casual and recreational sex – by choice and convention, as often as they wanted – as long as it wasn’t with the wives of other Roman men, or their as yet unmarried virgin daughters.

This sexual promiscuity was not only socially approved, but supported by a world view with two key features.

You see them reflected in v 13a

¹³ *“Food is for the stomach and the stomach for food,” and God will do away with both of them*

Food is a natural appetite that should be satisfied, and that satisfaction is pleasurable. In the same way sex is a natural appetite and bodily function, and to be enjoyed, for nature intends the enjoyment of life

And the body is not the permanent part of us. The soul, the eternal bit, is separable from the body, our material prison for this life, and what happens to the body does not affect the soul.

So satisfying your sexual appetite has no abiding significance, and no moral significance

, by a philosophy that said nature intends the enjoyment of life, and that the soul and body were separate, with the body perishing but the soul continuing and unaffected by the bodies conduct

Everything is permissible – casual and recreational sex allowed. Sound familiar?

In Melbourne

It ought to be, for the situation for men is not much different in Melbourne today, but in Melbourne, like much of the West, sexual freedom has been intensified, democratised and politicised, and sex has been made more accessible through changing social customs and things like on line porn and other technologies.

It has been intensified –

Using the quotes to summarize what we know, in a sense what we experience all the time

Trueman writes of how Freud has provided the West with a compelling myth – “the idea that sex, in terms of sexual desire and sexual fulfillment, is the real key to human existence, to what it means to be human” p. 204, where the happiness we all seek is identified as sexual pleasure – and you can’t be happy without sexual fulfillment p. 222

“The central notion – that human beings are at core sexual and that that shapes our thinking and our behaviour in profound, often unconscious, ways – is now a basic part of the modern social imaginary.” P. 221

So when you are talking about sex – you are not just talking of an activity, you are talking about identity p. 266, about what it means to be human, and the prescription of sexual codes is now either facilitating or frustrating someone’s humanity

It has been democratised – to embrace men and women

Technology – the pill and the prevention of unwanted pregnancy

And philosophy – feminism, some proponents of which viewed marriage as a patriarchal structure of oppression from which women needed to be freed, and the best way of doing that was to overcome the sexual code that restricted sex to marriage

The same sexual freedoms, and the same expectations, are now women’s

They can engage in and initiate recreational, uncommitted sex

It has been politicised

“Society now intuitively associates sexual freedom with political freedom because the notion that, in a very deep sense, we are defined by our sexual desires is something that has penetrated all levels of our culture’. P. 263

Sexual freedom a key part of political freedom p. 263, and any sexual code oppressive

'Everything is permissible to me' – is everyone's slogan now

And everything is available

Sex is more accessible than ever

Movies

Soapies, reality TV shows

Porn

Apps that are mainly designed to promote sexual encounters - Grindr

And all different kinds of sexual expression are available

To be had without any expectation of commitment

A weekend recreation

And as in 1st century Roman Corinth this assertion of sexual freedom has philosophical underpinnings

Which were summarised on my workmates mug.

My workmates mug – 'Life's a bitch and then you die'

Nothing more than this life

Life is short

Make it as pleasurable as possible, have a good time, because after that you rot – nothing survives death

Means no transcendent values

No higher purpose, no intrinsic meaning

Accountable to no one else

So make the most of your life – and don't let external codes stop you from getting pleasure where you can

Free to do anything – as long as you 'don't hurt anyone else' – whatever that means, however it is measured

Sex – anything goes, as long as it feels right for you

A potent mix – social acceptance, desire, and cultural assumptions that not only permits but positively encourages, affirms, sexual expression in whatever state and stage of life you are.

Paul knows their slogan, but he disagrees

1 Corinthians 6: ¹² "Everything is permissible for me," but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me," but I will not be mastered by anything.

Warns – other considerations, better questions for believers to ask – implying sexual promiscuity is destructive and enslaving

And then Paul takes on the social consensus. And note the way he does it

He disagrees with their behaviour – their sexual immorality

Doesn't just say 'stop it'

Doesn't argue from bad consequences – though he hints at them – 'I will not be mastered by anything,' at people becoming enslaved to porn, or the need for repeated sexual activity

And there are others – growing loneliness, unstable relationships, children growing up in insecure households

Instead he asks them first to think differently – to have their understanding of the world and what they do with their bodies in the world shaped by the gospel that Jesus is Lord

And then to act differently

Reminding them all the time of what they should know.

Christians' distinctive sexual ethic, an ethic at odds with what was accepted in 1st Romans Corinth and 21st century Melbourne, comes from what is at the core of the Christian message – not an add on, an optional extra, or a weird historical appendix that can be removed without great loss

But an expression of the gospel

Need to see that for, as Trueman writes, "When we address matters of sexual morality, we are actually addressing questions about the nature and purpose of human beings, the definition of happiness, and the relationship between the individual and the wider society and between men and women' T. p. 264

And the Christian sexual ethic has always been embedded in and an expression of, that wider framework of reality.

But let's look at Paul's argument addressed to those who believe 'everything is permissible.

The Gospel and the Body

1 Corinthians 6: ¹³ "Food is for the stomach and the stomach for food," and God will do away with both of them. However, the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴ God raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.

Incarnation v. 13

In the body the Lord won His victory over death, ensured the resurrection of our bodies

In the body we give visible expression that He is Lord – by our bodily obedience

We have embodied life because of God's purposes for His Son, that HE have a people redeemed by His death

Resurrection v. 14

And God's purpose embrace resurrection of our bodies

It's not – you die and then you, or your body, just rots

Your body is of eternal significance, has an eternal future in continuity with this present embodied existence

Because Christ has been raised bodily, so will His people be, raised bodily to eternal life [more in 1 Cor. 15]

Do you not know? Saving union with Christ vv. 15-17

*1 Corinthians 6:¹⁵ Don't you know that your bodies are a part of Christ's body? So should I take a part of Christ's body and make it part of a prostitute? Absolutely not! ¹⁶ Don't you know that anyone joined to a prostitute is one body with her? For Scripture says, **The two will become one flesh.** ¹⁷ But anyone joined to the Lord is one spirit with him.*

And Paul wants us to know, expects us to know, that our relationship with Christ changes our present as well as our future.

We are now united with Christ, by faith,

And this is not just an idea, it is a reality brought about by now sharing Christ's Spirit v. 17 [Romans 8:9-11]

Paul can speak of that reality in Galatians 2:20 in these terms – "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."

United with Him, one with Him in Spirit, we cannot take what is His, a part of Christ's body, and join it with a prostitute.

As the resurrection shows the significance of our bodies, union with Christ means union with a prostitute, any sexually immoral union – is incompatible with belonging to the Lord Jesus

It is a grotesque and offensive idea to join a part of Christ's body in a union condemned by the holy God

But says Paul, the nature of created sexual union means that is what is happening when a Christian man has sex with a prostitute

Do you not know? The created reality of sex v. 16 [Gen 2:24] – the intimacy creating design of sexual intercourse – Paul turns to the Old Testament, to Gen. 2:24, to correct their understanding of sex.

Their view of sex was not informed by the Creator, by His purpose in creating humanity as male and female, distinct and complementary in their bodies, complementary embodiment that is designed to find and express unity in sexual union.

And that union was not meant to be transient or casual, but to take place and help form and express a permanent relationship

Such a union would be unfaithful to the union already created by receiving the Spirit from Christ

That Spiritual union v. 17, on the model of God's design for our physical union, – calls for faithfulness and purity, single minded exclusive devotion

Knowing what the gospel says of the significance of our bodies

Knowing that we are spiritually united with Christ

Paul draws his first behavioural response, our first way of expressing the reality of who we are as believers in the Lord Jesus

Gospel informed response – Flee

1 Corinthians 6:18 Flee sexual immorality! Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the person who is sexually immoral sins against his own body

Flee – clear, direct, urgent

Sexual immorality – porneia – all sex outside marriage, and that includes porn

Our Lord said – Matt. 5:28-30

Porn is not harmless

Quote from Mona Charen in Trueman p. 294

“Feminists saw porn – accurately in my judgement – as a degradation of women. Yet they always interpret life through the narrow lens of women's oppression by men, which prevents them from seeing that its harm is to human dignity and not just to women as a class. Porn encourages immorality because it treats people as means, not ends – which is exactly what casual sex does. Porn is, in a sense, the logical end point of the sexual revolution because it completes the separation of sex from love and relationships. Sexual release is commodified, packaged, and sold. The right to pleasure may be assured, 24/7, but it carries with it the debasement of human beings.”

Flee - Not toy with, not pushing the boundaries by seeing how far you can go, not trying to balance on the edge of the cliff

Some 'can't condemn something unless you've tried it' – how about murder? Theft – if its your property? That is the drug dealers line as they try and make you into a new market.

Says there is a troubling uniqueness to sexual sin

Sexual sin is not more serious than other sin, more worthy of judgment than greed, or lying, or pride

But it does unique damage

No other sin has the effect Paul describes in v. 16

Sinning against our redeemed body, our body united with Christ.

It tears apart what should be one, and frustrates the spiritual intimacy we should have with Christ
Sex, uniquely body joining, can be uniquely body defiling, putting our bodies under the mastery of something other than our Lord

Do you not know? The believer's reality – holy and purposeful

1 Corinthians 6: ¹⁹ Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body.

[From is to ought]

Two ways of thinking of ourselves as believers that says sexual immorality has no place

Temple, and slavery

Temple

Wonder of Jesus' death

Cleansed

God the Holy Spirit can dwell in us

That is assurance of relationship – crying Abba Father, Romans 8

Assurance of our resurrection – the deposit guaranteeing what is to come [Eph 1]

The presence of the Spirit means Christians should think of themselves as the temple of the Holy Spirit

Carries an expectation – of holiness, of not doing anything that would defile it

As the place where only what pleases God should be done

And a warning – like the one in 1 Cor. 3

Believer's reality – should trouble you

You live in the presence of the Holy God

When you think you are alone – God is with you

Sees what you see – would you look at what is defiling, hateful to him

Hears the words you speak - would you speak lies in His presence

The presence of the Spirit means we should live holy lives – in fear and trembling

That reality should influence you more than the thought that you might have to confess something to your accountability group

Bought with a price. You are not your own.

Paul uses the language of slavery. Very offensive to us, who so prize our autonomy

To be a slave is to be there to do your Master's will, and only His will

But even though they had better knowledge of slavery, this was not a wholly offensive image,

For the prestige and status of a slave depended on whose slave you were – the emperor's domestic slaves, for example, were regarded as a privileged group

And they also knew a good master assumed responsibility for the daily needs and welfare of his slaves

To be God's slaves, purchased as such a great price as Jesus' death, was a great honour and a source of eternal security.

But they also understood the reality of slavery, and so the point of Paul's image.

Paul is saying that to be a Christian is to belong to Jesus, to know that body and soul you are there to do His will, and are expected to show Him exclusive loyalty and faithfulness.

The essence of slavery is to be given over, 100%, your whole person, to doing the will of your Master, to know that you are accountable to Him for everything you do in every part of life.

God has a right to expect us to do what He says

And our goal – is to bring Him honour

We are to live for Him – with the bodies He has given us, the bodies He will raise

That is in all our lives, but in this context especially by exercising the self control that only uses His good gift of sexuality as He commands, in the context for which He has created it – marriage between a man and a woman

Anything else is the porneia we are to flee from

Is uniquely destructive

Dishonours the presence of God's Spirit in us

Is faithless and disloyal to Him who has bought us for Himself, secured our eternity, at the cost of the death of His Son

And denies the gospel realities of Christ's incarnation, resurrection, and union with Christ

So let's pull this together

Talking about sex

Not yet a believer

Appalled

By this restriction of freedom, the imposition of a sexual code that will only produce guilt and fear, a narrative of oppression

Hopefully seen that this sexual code is not isolated, but based on the Christian worldview, an expression of the truth of the gospel in our embodied lives

And that is a narrative, not of oppression, but of freedom and hope

Issue – is the world as you believe it to be

Or Has Jesus been raised from the dead

You may never have thought of it like that, that that is the question you really need to engage with

But it is

On the one hand – there is a world where we just rot, are here by chance, are accountable only to ourselves, where people, and sexual union, are nothing special, and what you do doesn't matter in any grand scheme and so you should pursue what gives you pleasure

Or there is a resurrection future, here for the Lord, with purpose; where we are accountable to our Master Jesus, where people are made in God's image, and the marriage with sexual union serves is holy, an image of Christ and His church, and what you do now matters for eternity

And you can't be honest in your dismissal of the Christian sexual ethic until you recognise that it is integrated with the whole Christian understanding of reality, and you have examined its foundation, you have examined the truth of the resurrection

Can't decline to do so or dismiss it just because you may not like the consequences, that if it is true you would need to change

[Sartre

Begs the question – did he put God to death so that he could continue to indulge his sexual freedom]

Easter, the crucifixion and resurrection of the Son of God, tells us that wanting God dead does not kill God

Attracted

Attracted to what has been said tonight because you are appalled at the chaos and destruction our sexual freedom has brought

For there is a cost

Loneliness – casual sex

Instability of relationships, damage of children not living with biological parents

Difficulty with intimacy created by porn

The dehumanising of casual sex

Issues of consent, and ensuring it is genuine

Exploitation and objectification of women

Recognise, especially for women, casual, uncommitted sex, despite its representation in much media, was a con – giving blokes exactly what they want – sex without commitment or consequence

See an alternative, committed permanent relationships between men and women in which children can be nurtured, and where sex is the servant, not the master

Men and women committed to faithfulness

Sense its sanity

But are not sure, not sure of its foundation – the life, death and resurrection of Jesus

Investigate

Wounded [1 Cor. 6:11]

1 Corinthians 6: ⁹ Don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom? Do not be deceived: No sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, or males who have sex with males, ¹⁰ no thieves, greedy people, drunkards, verbally abusive people, or swindlers will inherit God's kingdom. ¹¹ And some of you used to be like this. 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.

Grieved and hurt by sexual freedom, by recreational, uncommitted sex

Realise it meant more, at least to you

Felt exposed, betrayed, used

Or you have guilt because you were the user, knew you were speaking just to get your own way, and now you feel shame

Or maybe you have realised its enslaving power, the way say porn has come to dominate your life

Jesus can bring change, can bring forgiveness

Believer

Not me [Num. 32:23, Gal. 6:7-8, 1 Thess. 4:3-8]

Galatians 6: ⁷ Don't be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a person sows he will also reap, ⁸ because the one who sows to his flesh will reap destruction from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 4: ³ For this is God's will, your sanctification: that you keep away from sexual immorality, ⁴ that each of you knows how to control his own body in holiness and honor, ⁵ not with lustful passions, like the Gentiles, who don't know God. ⁶ This means one must not transgress against and take advantage of a brother or sister in this manner, because the Lord is an avenger of all these offenses, as we also previously told and warned you. ⁷ For God has not called us to impurity but to live in holiness. ⁸ Consequently, anyone who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.

Say you are a believer, but telling yourself this does not apply to you

Keep watching that porn

Keep pressuring your girlfriend or boyfriend into sex – for all sorts of reasons

Even seeking out casual sex

Warn you – your sin will find you out

God is not mocked

No place in our fellowship for those who want to keep on sinning sexually

Convicted [Ps. 51, Mark 3:28]

Mark 3: ²⁸ "Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for all sins and whatever blasphemies they utter.

Perhaps you are a believer and God has convicted you of sin

What to do?

Repent – means break with it completely. Stop

Must want to change

Difference between remorse and repentance, the sorrow that leads to death and the sorrow that leads to life

Can't outsource that – to some kind of group, or your spouse

Seek forgiveness

There is forgiveness Mark 3:28

David – Psalm 51

Talk – bring it into the open with another believer. Sin thrives on shame

Guilt – seen as great evil, but its useful if you have informed your conscience by the truth, and if it turns you to God in repentance and faith. Don't think guilt is the problem – rather it is the behaviour that has made you guilty – why repentance precedes forgiveness

Hypocrisy – feel you are a hypocrite, and rob you of joy and vitality in the Christian life

But there is restoration

Then I will teach transgressors your ways

Sin in the context of being – engaged or talking about getting married [premarital sex]

Desire is strong because you have grown close

Think it alright because you are in the context of a serious, committed relationship

Not married, it is sin

Pregnancy, fear of pregnancy – brings it to be known, or your own conscience troubles you

Conviction that you are doing the wrong thing – is a reason to stop sinning

It is not a reason to get married

Make that clear – you would have to decide on other grounds

In fact, it may well be a reason not to marry

And it is always a great way to make any subsequent marriage difficult

Why?

It is because often there has been pressure, the pressure, usually of the bloke's desire – that has led to it

And that pressure may have been kept up despite objections

The bloke not hearing you

Not a good relationship, where you are pressured and your views, objections overruled

And already you, or one of you, are putting your word against Jesus' word, claiming something to be right where Jesus' word says it is wrong

Failure of self control – and that is what you need to love each other

And all those things damage trust

So you could be looking at living with someone who doesn't listen to you, who doesn't listen to Jesus, who puts their will or desire above God's will and your wishes, and who can't be trusted to have enough self control to put your interests above their own

So why would you want to marry them, or think the marriage will be anything but difficult

Believer, and you have heard God say that sex is marriage between a man and a woman, and you are committed to living that way

Great

Persevering [Song of Songs 2:7]

Be thankful. Don't view it as a great cost, but God's instruction as a gift, given for your good, given to save you much grief

Don't be conned by the lies of the world – that uncommitted, recreational, sex is what you should want and desire

That sexual fulfilment is the key to your identity and happiness

The world's propaganda is constant and everywhere – friends talking of their weekends, movies

Pleasure for a season, and after - death

Following Jesus – much richer identity, and a greater goal

And freedom, to be and pursue so much more

Keep doing what God's word says because you trust the Lord Jesus

Flee – its easy to think you can resist something you don't know the power of, and so you push the boundaries

Flee

Listen to the wisdom of the Song of Songs

Knows the delight and power of desire in the context of a committed relationship

*Song of Songs 2: 7 Young women of Jerusalem, I charge you
by the gazelles and the wild does of the field,
do not stir up or awaken love
until the appropriate time.*

If you want to avoid a destructive explosion don't light the fuse until the explosive is placed where it ought to be

Wait until the right time

Flee

And focus on glorifying God – focus on the Lord Jesus, and becoming who you are in Christ

The fruit of the Spirit

That will set you up for a contented life whether single or married

[And it will teach you to think of marriage differently]

A contented life of loving and doing good.