

## SERIES: PRESCRIPTIONS FOR A HEALTHY & HOLY CHURCH:

A Study in 1 Corinthians Applied To The Church Today

### II. DEALING WITH OBVIOUS DISEASES

## D.) SELF-MUTILATION

### (1 Cor. 6:12-20)

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## INTRODUCTION:

One of the fastest-growing and more disturbing trends in our society today is that of self-mutilation. This is especially common among teens and can take many forms, the most popular being cutting, burning and piercing. Most of us, if we hear or see pictures about such things, and can only shake our head and wonder, “*what could possibly motivate anyone to do that to themselves?*” The short answer is a perceived need for a feeling of control, self-determinism, and expression of pain in a world in which they believe these things are either not otherwise possible or permissible. It truly is very sad.

What is even more sad, perhaps, is how common and accepted this practice is within and upon the Body of Christ! Oh, it takes different forms, looks different, and is thought of differently, but it's really not so different. We just aren't as quick to recognize it for what it is or the attitudes that lead to and produce it. Christians too mutilate themselves and the Body of Christ.

## PRAYER

In addressing this issue of disrespecting our bodies and, thus Christ's Body, the Holy Spirit-directed Apostle Paul focuses on **3 Key Attitudes which Mutilate:**

### 1.) **CONTROL** (v. 12)

- Notice that Paul begins not by condemning specific behavior, but rather the underlying attitude that leads to such behavior, the first of which is the attitude of control.
- “*Everything is permissible for me*” was apparently an oft-spoken theology and defense of the Corinthian Christians. The argument, presumably, was that “because we are saved, we are free to do as we please and nobody else has the right or authority to in any way restrict us from our own judgment and choices.”
- . . . ***but not everything is helpful.*** Scripture's first qualifier is that the real measure of what we do is NOT what we *can*, or have the *right* to do, BUT rather whether it is helpful or beneficial (in the eyes of God, our Judge)!
- . . . ***but I will not be brought under the control of anything.*** This second qualifier is a reminder that there is no true or genuine freedom in that which ultimately masters us – except the freedom we have in Christ as our only Master! Any other master is a slave-master.
- Yes, we have the freedom to choose in all of our attitudes and actions, but that in itself does not make us free! We have freedom to sin, but that sin will then immediately claim us as it's slave.
- ILLUSTRATION: College Ministry Leadership Camp. Already had one torn ankle from soccer. Finally able to put some weight on it while wearing my supports. Decided I could play B-ball and just make sure if I jumped I always landed on my 'good leg.' I jumped. I landed on my good leg. My good ankle, having been overburdened the past 4-6 weeks, tore. Even with

help, I could not walk or even stand. After being carried back to our cabin, I realized I needed to use the bathroom. Let's just say he proved himself a very good friend! I had the right and even physical ability to try to play B-ball then. But doing so sure was not either smart or beneficial! *I thought that doing so would be a way to re-assert some more control back into my life after being so limited. Instead, I ended up further losing control!*

- ILLUSTRATION: Matt Thornton interview. *“I used to keep my sins and struggles hidden. But I learned that it is much easier, better and more free-ing to just be upfront and honest with them at the start.”*
- Though not a Christian, even Mark Twain observed: *“It is by the goodness of God that in our country we have those three unspeakably precious things: freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, and the prudence never to practice either of them”* (emphasis mine)

## 2.) **IMPULSE** (v. 13)

- The Second Key Attitude which mutilates is that of automatically following our impulses.
- **“Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods”** was, apparently, another common analogous argument for bodily license. This slogan was the first century equivalent to our saying *“If it's natural, it must be okay,”* or *“If it feels good, just do it.”*
- More specifically, they have been concluding that in the same way that all edible food has been permissible through Christ as a natural need, function and 'fit', then so should all other physical activities of the body. In particular, sexuality activities. Engaging in any sexual activity, they would argue, is no different than feeding your stomach and lusting after sexual images and activity is no different than hunger pangs. They are both natural bodily functions and therefore should not be limited or condemned.
- *... but God will do away with both of them.* Paul immediately responds by stabbing at the heart of the problem. The Corinthian's argument is built on the foundation of belief that the body and spirit are completely separate and only the spirit is eternal. The point of this statement, then, is that yes God will destroy our need for physical nourishment (the stomach and food), but He will not destroy our bodies.
- The purpose of our stomach and of food is to strengthen our bodies. The purpose of our bodies, however, is to strengthen our relationship with the Lord! Therefore, what we do to the body we do to the Lord.
- *... The body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.*
- **We are not to live in order to gratify the appetites of our bodies, but rather than to gratify the Lord through our bodies!!!**

## 3.) **OWNERSHIP** (vv. 14-20)

- The Third Key Attitude which mutilates is that of ownership.
- The Corinthians have been acting on the assumption that the Lord may own their spirit, but *they* own *their* own bodies. Further, when we die, our spirits may go to be judged but our bodies continue to be worm food. NOT!
- We far too frequently make the same mistake. **ALL of us, need to carefully understand what is the truth about our bodies and what implications this has for us all!**

### a.) Our Bodies **Last Eternally** (v. 14)

- Christ's death on the cross was for the redemption not only of our spirits, but our bodies. Similarly, our bodies are not destined for destruction but for resurrection!
- Christ was resurrected and dwells in the presence of God in His physical body, and so will we who believe by faith through grace.

### b.) Therefore, They Are Eternally **Christ's** (v. 15-16)

- To be saved and redeemed by Christ, is to be joined together with His Body.
- As His body is eternal, so our bodies will be made eternal. As He is eternal, so our union with Him is eternal.
- To engage in sexual activity of any kind, is to similarly join in union with another. To join another in such a way as a Christian is to also then to force Christ into the participation. Imagine, if you will, that you have been made a conjoined (Siamese) twin with Jesus. It is impossible to engage your body in a physical activity without also dragging Him into in some way.

### c.) Thus, Sins of the Body, especially **Sexual Sins**, Matter **Eternally** (vv. 18-19b)

- Therefore, the only solution is to **FLEE!!!! Run away! Don't go anywhere near it, and don't let it come anywhere near you!**
- ***“Every sin a person can commit is outside the body.”*** Again, another slogan and excuse of the Corinthians, not to mention many Christians today.
- ***. . . but the person who is sexually immoral sins against his own body.*** According to Scripture, however, that is not so – most especially in the case of sexual sin. It IS directly and unalterably a sin against not only of but *against* the body.
- ***Do you not know that your body is sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God?*** In fact, not only is it a sin against your body, but it is undeniably a desecration of the Lord's sanctuary and thus a grave sin against the Lord!
- **Folks, there is nothing private or solitary about sexual immorality – even that which is committed in private or in solitude!**

### d.) One **Assignment: Glorify God!** (vv. 19c-20)

- Not only are we sinning against our own body, but it's really not even our own body – it belongs to Christ! We are defiling and sinning against His Body!!!
- The language, by the way, is clearly that of slavery. We have been slaves to sin, but have been bought out of slavery by Christ upon the cross of Calvary and are now His! When we sin, especially in sexual immorality we are also re-subjugating this body to the slavery from which He gave His life to free us!

**CONCLUSION: USE YOUR BODY TO GLORIFY GOD**

Think about it. Do not most people, even non-Christians, act and behave differently in God's church or God's sanctuary than they do most any other building? Why? Because they recognize this is a place made special by both the presence and blessing of God and thus deserves much greater respect and discretion. People step into a church and they take their hat off, they carefully monitor their language and word choice, they're extra careful to demonstrate good manners. Yet, Scripture tells us that in Christ are very bodies are sanctuaries of God. Should we not then apply at least the same extra considerations to how we use and behave around our bodies as we do the sanctuary?

**Say with me: "My body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. God dwells in me."**  
(repeat 3 xs)

## **RESOURCES:**

<http://www.purelifeministries.org/>

[www.goodfightgroups.org](http://www.goodfightgroups.org) (support group that meets at Loudonville Community Church)

Anthony Barker 518-272-9724

<http://www.pureonline.com/>

<http://xxxchurch.com/>

<http://www.newlife.com/>