

Title: THE LIMITS OF FREEDOM, 1 CORINTHIANS 6:12 – 20  
(Chatham, NJ; 01/15/12, AM) [D – Exegetical]

Theme: In demonstrating the limits of free expression of sexual relationships Paul provides the foundation for the limits of freedom in other areas of life.

Purpose: To explain why our freedoms are not absolute and why we are bound by the community, the nature of sexual relations, and our own physical limitations.

Introduction:

1. Absolute personal autonomy violates true freedom. We are never completely free from restraints.
2. President Manuel Zelaya of Honduras sought to free himself from the restraints of his constitution by trying to hold a referendum to change it. He wanted a second term but their laws say a president can hold only one.
3. He didn't like having his power limited. This is us.
4. We don't want our choices or power limited by restraints, so we do whatever we can to eliminate the restraints.
5. The "sexual ethics" of 1 Corinthians 6 addresses the issues behind certain limitations of our freedom; we'll use these as a paradigm for other areas of restraint.
6. I will list these things by stating how contemporary people express their autonomy and idolize their personal choices.
7. Paul begins by quoting statements from the Corinthians (6:12-13) that have been misused to express their freedoms.

#### I. "As long as it doesn't hurt others." Communal Implications

##### A. The church

1. We are members of Christ's body, 15
2. Sexual immorality violates the body of Christ, the church
3. Public action and sexual intimacy are integrated
4. Sexual intimacy creates the bond that is a marriage; marriage is the most important institution in society
5. Sexual intimacy in any other context ultimately tears apart the fabric of society

##### B. Society at large

1. What we do affects others whether we see it or not
2. When we say "doesn't hurt," we usually mean "not do any violent physical harm" but it does hurt in other ways, especially emotional ones
3. There are always unintended consequences of our actions
4. You have control of your choices but you don't have control of the consequences of those choices
5. What we do even in private is rarely just "a private matter between two individuals"

#### II. "Sex is just physical pleasure," (more implied or wished for than reality) It Creates a Whole Relationship

##### A. One body with a prostitute, 16

1. Sexual relationships extend to and involve the whole personality
2. Sex as a physical act denies this and denies what we know intuitively
3. Paul centers his reasoning in creation which established marriage as an act of becoming "one flesh"
4. He uses the same reasoning in Ephesians 5:31 and calls it a "profound mystery"

##### B. Casual relationships are contrary to the created order

1. Entangled relationships are created even when sex is viewed as casual
2. In Witness, Whittaker Chambers pointed out that Communists (sworn to destroy all vestiges of marriage, an alleged oppressive bourgeois institution) still suffered emotionally when they severed ties of sexual intimacy
3. "Friends with benefits" is a violation of things inherently human
4. We know that sex means more than mere physical union
5. It creates a bond that is good and should be maintained

III. Divorcing one part of someone's personality from another part (sexually immoral people claim they are good, warm, and kind; these are what seem to count in the minds of those who advocate all manner of sexual perversions) The Physical Body Is Important

- A. Sin against the body, 18
  1. Sexual immorality sins against the physical body
  2. All other sins are outside the body
  3. Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who dwells within you, 19
  4. Whereas some early heresies suggested the body was evil and sought to spiritualize everything, Christianity actually redeems and sanctifies the body as a Temple of the living God
- B. Image of God is defaced by sexual immorality
  1. Though non-Christians do not have the indwelling Spirit, that is precisely the problem; they don't have God but they still sin against him in this way
  2. They are dead because God is not present with them
  3. Their bodies and souls are degraded by all manner of sexual immorality
  4. They need to be redeemed and filled with the Spirit

Conclusion:

1. "You are not your own," says verse 19.
2. Paul speaks to the Christian, but it can be said of all humanity in another sense.
3. God owns the entire world, Psalm 50:10-11 & 95:4-5. His ownership extends to all of sinful humanity.
4. That is why he calls them into the church; they have rebelled but must return to the owner and savior of their bodies and souls.
5. Back in 1 Corinthians 6:13 Paul said that "the body is meant for the Lord."
6. No matter how hard people seek to sever their ties to God and to his laws, creation was meant to glorify God; it was meant for the Lord.
7. There is no such thing as absolute freedom: we live in a community, what we do affects that community (including and especially sexual unions), and what we do with our bodies is as important as other behaviors.
8. The Gospel defines the necessary limits on our freedom; it provides us the most freeing thing of all: freedom from the judgment of sin.
9. As a community of God's people we stand for this and for all the laws of God.
10. We must continue to teach and witness to the truths about freedom and sexual morality to a world that know very little about them.