

1 Corinthians 6:12-20March 18, 2012 – 4th SUNDAY IN LENT**You Were Bought With A Price!**✠ **Do not be mastered by anything.** (vv.12-17)✠ **Glorify God with your body.** (vv.18-20)

In the name of Jesus, our merciful Lord and Savior, dearly redeemed children of God:

Years ago I was visiting an old man in his study. He laughed showing trophies of his long, productive life. But glancing over at his shelf, his eyes welled up in tears. His little dog had died ten years before. A small urn held the ashes. That tiny creature gave him unconditional love. Tough as he was in so many ways, the old man could not talk about the loss of his pet without tears.

Last week I told you again about the boy who worked so hard to buy that puppy in the pet shop, only to have it run away. When he found it in another pet shop, the owner would not believe it was his. So he worked to buy it back again. “I bought you twice!” he said. “Don’t ever run away.”

God literally made us His own twice too. First, He created us, but then we ran away into sin. He searched until He found us and bought us back at the price of His own blood. For many people the pets we love are our dearest possession. But if you can see yourself held close in the arms of God, you begin to feel the power of His plea to you today: **You Were Bought With A Price!** First this means....

✠ **Do not be mastered by anything.** (vv.12-17)

It always amazes me when I read Paul’s letter to the Corinthians how patient he was with them. You read his comments and almost think he can’t win. When he preaches the law to show them their sin, they act as if they are better than that. What kind of arrogance would pit one pastor against another or say, **“I follow Christ”** (1:12), as if that meant not listening to Christ’s apostles. Christians still struggle to look past the man to the message of our Lord through His pastors today. But when Paul preaches God’s grace in Christ, they want to ignore God’s law as if they’re free to sin as they please. Reminds me of a mother trying to raise teenagers. “You give them a hand,” she said, “and they want your arm too!”

One Corinthian living in gross immorality needed the strict discipline of excommunication to win him back for the Lord. Some members were so filled with pride they were suing their fellow Christians in court. They thought like people today, “God will forgive me,” or “God wants me to be happy.” Then they do what God forbids, deaf to His pleading through Paul right before our text: **“Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. 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.”** (6:9–11 NIV84)

God sets us free from the curse and coercion of the law. But then our sinful nature wants to run like teenagers out with the car for the first time. Just because you have the power in the pedal to go faster, doesn’t mean it’s safe or wise. They were saying to Pastor Paul, **“Everything is permissible for me,”** but he reminded them, **“Not everything is beneficial.”** They insisted, **“Everything is permissible for me,”** but Paul answered, **“I will not be mastered by anything.”** His next example makes you think Paul was living in America today. **“Food for the stomach and the stomach for food,”** some were saying, but Paul reminded them, **“God will destroy them both.”** See how insidious this is? If we can’t say, “No!” to food we don’t need, it has us by the throat. But if your self image means not eating when you should, then vanity’s got a grip on you which can lead to anorexia and other eating disorders.

Maybe Paul’s next example seems overstated, but the Holy Spirit knows. He is full God with the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit loves you unconditionally and completely too. Some Christians think, “I’m free in Christ. God will forgive me.” Then they sin by sex outside of marriage, but the Lord

says through Paul: ***“The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.”*** You may feel like you’re going to die saying, “No!” to your desires, but the Lord assures us, ***“By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.”*** Bible study and prayer will get you past those lonely, dying times and back into the light and life of peace and joy in Jesus.

Some of you are aware of the firestorm in the media these past weeks when a young woman was called a “prostitute” for demanding that the government pay for her contraceptives. People don’t like the names God gives to sin either, as when He refers to sex outside of marriage as “fornication.” Media types don’t want to be called ***“slanderers,”*** politicians would never admit to ***“swindlers,”*** Christian men and women don’t want to be called ***“greedy.”*** And some insist, “I don’t care what you rightwing nut cases call me!” Hard hearts are running rampant in America today. Right in my office a young couple seriously said their WELS pastor never told them it was a sin to live together unmarried. They weren’t listening to their folks back home either. From God’s perspective, if you don’t like His names for these sins, don’t commit the sins.

“Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body. For it is said, ‘The two will become one flesh.’” Sexual intimacy God guards in order to make marriage an awesome blessing. Will we guard God’s gift of marriage? Christians may fail to vote on the Marriage Amendment this Fall not realizing that no vote is considered a “No”-vote for traditional marriage and a “Yes”-vote for homosexual unions. All too soon we must all stand before the Almighty Judge and give an account. How much more loving, kind and clear could God be? What God wants is this, ***“He who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.”*** God does not want us running back to sin like a foolish puppy, stuck on the streets or caught to be sold again. But God does want us running....

† **Glorify God with your body. (vv.18-20)**

“Flee from sexual immorality.” Temptation is no time to sit down and think about it. Danger for the soul can come so quickly. It’s like trying to cross a busy street in China. Americans cannot imagine the chaos of so many cars, trucks, buses and bicycles all cramming the same streets when a wave a pedestrians, hundreds and thousands of them, surge across all at once. We never tried to cross without our Chinese hosts to guide us. Once about dusk we were crossing with Rev. Wang who suddenly said, “Stop!” I did. A split second later a truck surged past too fast for me to see it coming.

“Stop!” says the Holy Spirit. Save your soul from sorrow. ***“All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.”*** It’s like sitting around a campfire up north and waiting until the fire has burned to red hot coals. You could scatter them around and maybe start a few fires, but if you scoop them into your lap, you’ll start a fire you won’t forget. Unfortunately, sexual sins keep dulling our memory and holding out hope for happiness if just one more time....

These days it’s so easy to think you’re getting away with it. You could be a family man, highly respected at church and occupying an important position like the former Communications Director of our synod. You don’t realize you’re chatting online with an FBI agent. He gathers enough information to seize your computers and charge you with child pornography. Dear friends, God’s grace is real, His forgiveness true. But like David with Bathsheba, trying to cover up adultery with murder, ***“A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.”*** (Galatians 6:7f NIV84) God wants to spare us shame here on earth and everlasting destruction with His enemies in hell.

“Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.” What a peaceful, quiet place He wants for you to live in the joy and peace of Jesus. ***“You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body.”*** Like a boy feeding his puppy, God brings health and healing with a steady diet of Word and sacrament. If you’re living at home with God, good! You’re safe and secure. If you’re wandering away, your loving Master is calling, “Puppy, come home!” **You Were Bought With A Price! Do not be mastered by anything.** For Jesus’ sake, **Glorify God with your body.** Amen.