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Scripture

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

¹²“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are beneficial. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything. ¹³“Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food,” and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. ¹⁵Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, “The two shall be one flesh.” ¹⁷But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. ¹⁸Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. ¹⁹Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? ²⁰For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.

Devotional

“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are beneficial. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything. Here Paul is chiding those among the Corinthian community who falsely claim a freedom to enact carnal desires without discerning the effects such actions have on the individual and on the community. Paul thus provides the foundation and a principle for discerning whether something is beneficial or harmful to individuals, the community, and creation. He asks them and us to step back and reflect on the source and purpose of our lives. Why were we created, redeemed, and gifted with the Holy Spirit if it were not for God’s desire for us to be united in love with God, one another, and all creation as living members of Christ’s Body, glorifying God? That’s the foundation! Every desire, thought, word, and action leads us either toward or away from the purpose for which we were created. The principle for discerning our choices, then, is twofold: (1) do I recognize which direction this particular desire, thought, word, or action is leading me or could lead me, and (2) do I choose and act upon that which glorifies God or that which further enslaves me, the community, or creation?

Prayer

Gracious God, in your loving mercy and for the sake of your glory, help me each day to notice more accurately those desires, thoughts, words, and actions that are leading me toward you and those that are leading me away from you, and grant me the grace to act or reject them accordingly. Amen.