

**Under New Ownership**  
**1 Corinthians 6:20**

*You were brought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*

Brothers and sisters in Christ, a few years ago a church in Iowa had the opportunity to acquire a building in its town that had been left empty. It was an old clinic, but not just any old clinic. This was a place known for receiving pregnant women who were looking to abort their babies. It had closed because it could no longer be funded.

The church saw this as a tremendous opportunity. They purchased the building but kept it as a clinic. It was still used to receive pregnant women, but it brought in doctors, nurses, and counselors, along with church member volunteers, to help the mothers with pregnancy issues until the unborn child could be born.

Maybe the transformation of the building was not as dramatic as a dilapidated high-rise that now is a beautiful structure of affordable housing, but it was still a great transformation.

What this church in Iowa did highlights the transformation of a Christian. It is a change that comes only because of the living and powerful Word of God. The building was changed for the holy purpose of affirming God-given life by people who were also transformed. The people of this Iowa Lutheran Church weren't holier-than-thou types. They were, and are, sinners redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ. That led them to share Christ to those in need.

Do you think of yourself the same way? Do you think of being owned by another? Those questions sadly bring images of slavery, but it's true. You are not neutral, nor are you really the master of your own life.

The Corinthians thought they were. They misunderstood the freedom that their new faith gave to them. The one thing they rightly perceived was that their conversion to Christianity freed them from a slavery to a different type of life. Speaking only in a general sense, because we

don't know the backgrounds of each Corinthian Christian, most had lived with the idea that their deity required special works so that one would receive favor.

Then the apostle Paul came along with a different message. Jesus Christ was a redeemer. He set people free from old ways of life. No longer was it required that a deity be appeased by works. Though Paul also taught them God's Law, they took their freedom too far.

The motto of the Corinthian Christians had apparently become, "All things are lawful for me." In other words, "I can do what I want. I still believe in God, which is all that matters." This must have applied to many areas of life, but especially to intimate relations. The Corinthians saw their Christian freedom as allowing sexual relations with anyone they wanted, even with prostitutes. They went so far as to compare the need for sexual relations to the need for eating.

Paul is appalled at their attitudes and actions. He answers each of their statements with ones of his own. They cannot be overpowered by their desires. It shows their weakness. Their whole body, not just their soul, belongs to the Lord. Body and soul serve the Lord at all times, or are supposed to. Their arrogance, therefore, has actually left them still enslaved to sin.

Look at your life. Where are your weaknesses? I am not going to suggest that any of you are having ungodly sexual relations, but I'm no fool to think we are all pure in that regard. But where are you thinking that you can do what you want with your body: think, act, or speak however you choose?

The world is watching you closely. The world generally does not like that Christians are different, but it still watches. And if it sees that Christians speak and act hypocritically, it judges there to be no value in being a Christian. Yes, faith matters, but so too does your way of life.

Do you know what you are? You are like that building that has been used for evil purposes. You are really no good, no use. Or you are that run-down building. You need more

than just a little touch-up – you need a full body and soul makeover. You need a new owner, because those who are arrogant are run by the devil. That leads to condemnation and suffering.

Yet Paul speaks of the new owner that you and the Corinthians already have at work within you. He is Christ. You are a member of Christ through your Baptism into Him. This is the new identity that you have. But it is not an identity that you take advantage of by doing what you want. The advantage is that He remodels your life.

Baptism brings you right to the cross. There you were bought at a price that was so high that only the Son of God could pay it. All people one day pay the price for their sins though death. But that is deserved. Jesus paid the price for sin that He did not deserve, for He had no sin. But He paid the price because His life and blood did something about sin.

All your sexual sins, like those of the Corinthians, as well as all other sins like gossip, lying, cheating, stealing, swearing, anger, jealousy, and general disregard for others have all been paid for. Jesus' holy blood removes all that is damaged and dirty in you because of sin. Every hole is patched with Jesus' love and mercy. All that is evil is removed. Jesus took your sin and shame and created in you a clean heart. He suffered God's wrath so you don't have to face the wrecking ball of hell. This is why you cannot be your own – you would be nothing.

What you receive by faith changes your life. You are forgiven, not so that you can sin some more, but so that you can live for Christ. Forgiven people glorify God by becoming living sacrifices. You get to show that you are a proud possession of your heavenly owner.

When you are baptized you are united to Christ and made a member of His body. You owe your whole life to Him because He has redeemed both your body and soul. All that you are as His is to reflect His ownership of you. But this is not a burden, for Jesus bids all to come to Him who are weak and burdened. He gives rest from sins of thought, word, and deed.

This means that you do not belong to sin or the devil. All the chains that sin and the devil had on you are broken. Their power is nothing. Their words are just lies. The devil is a fraud and a phony, and Christ's Word drives him out of your life.

It also means that you do not belong to yourself. It might be easy to think that as long as you believe you are going to be just fine. That is not the case. Though your body and soul are distinct, they are united to make you, you. What you do affects your faith, so if you seek out sin your faith gets weak. Yet faith can affect your life so that you can be a new creation.

Your life is an on-going renovation project. Baptism was just the beginning. It means that the decrepit you isn't left that way. The One who began a good work in you will bring it to completion. Every day you are given new opportunities to serve: to speak God's truth, to love all around you, even if they seem unlovable, to speak for the rights of the unborn or elderly, and to be a leader in church. Every day God forgives until the day of resurrection when you are pure.

Baptism has taken you, a sinner, and united you to an owner who makes you much better. Therefore, honor God with every part of your body: your mind, your soul, and all your parts. Be to others a light of Christ's goodness, so that God is daily glorified. Amen.