

Sunday, August 14, 2016—I Corinthians 6:12: All Things Are Lawful

Introduction

- Last week, we finished our study of the first section of chapter 6 by looking by looking at verses 9-11. In this section, Paul had primarily been dealing with the Corinthians about their going “to law with one another before the unjust, and not before the saints.”
- This morning we want to begin looking at the second part of the chapter by considering verse 12. The second part of chapter 6 is taken up with a discussion on how one should possess his body in honor as the temple of the God.

I Corinthians 6:12

- **All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.**
- Within the flow of chapter 6, this verse marks the beginning of a new paragraph. Beginning in verse 12, Paul is going to start talking about a new topic from what he had been addressing in verses 1-11.
- *All things are lawful unto me*—Paul begins this section by stating that “all things” are in the present tense “lawful” for him to do.
- According to Noah Webster’s *American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828) the English word “lawful” carries the following meanings:
 - Agreeable to law; conformable to law; allowed by law; legal; legitimate. That is deemed *lawful* which no law forbids, but many things are *lawful* which are not expedient.
 - Constituted by law; rightful; as the *lawful* owner of lands.
- During the earthly ministry of Christ the question of lawfulness came up all the time as the Lord interacted with the Pharisees. In all of the verses we are going to look at., the question of lawfulness was being asked with respect to the Mosaic Law.
 - Matthew 12:2-4, 10-12
 - Luke 14:3
 - Luke 20:22
- I Corinthians 6:12—how is it that Paul could even think about stating that “all things are lawful unto me? Because he knew that he was no longer under that law system.

- Romans 6:14
- Colossians 2:14—living under grace, with the law having been taken out of the way, there was nothing that was unlawful for the Apostle Paul.
- *but all things are not expedient*—note the contrast “but” at the beginning of the second phrase. Just because all things are lawful does not mean that they are “expedient.”
- Noah Webster records the following meanings for the English word “expedient.”
 - Literally, hastening; urging forward. Hence, tending to promote the object proposed; fit or suitable for the purpose; proper under the circumstances. Many things may be lawful, which are not *expedient*.
 - Useful; profitable.
- Likewise the dictionary defines “expedience” as:
 - Fitness or suitability to effect some good end or the purpose intended; propriety under the particular circumstances of a case. The practicability of a measure is often obvious, when the *expedience* of it is questionable.
- The question of expediency is really a question of profitability. The same Greek word translated “expedient” is also translated “profitable” in other places throughout the New Testament.
 - Matthew 5:29-30
 - Acts 20:20
 - I Corinthians 10:23, 33
- I Corinthians 6:12—just because the law has been taken out of the way and “all things are lawful” does not mean that all things are expedient or profitable.
- *all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any*—just in case you missed it the first time, Paul reiterates the first phrase again. Notice that once again, the statement regarding lawfulness is followed by a contrast with the word “but.”
- The words “be brought under the power” are a translation of a single Greek word which deals with power over something.
 - Luke 22:25

- Paul is literally saying that he will not allow himself to be mastered by anything even though it would have been lawful for him to do so.
- Using an illustration for the context, Paul brought up “drunkenness” in verse 10. Is it “lawful” for you drink alcohol as a believer? Yes. If you drink alcohol in excess and become intoxicated is God doing punish you physically for having done so? No.
- Is the consumption of alcohol ever expedient or profitable for a believer?
 - I Timothy 5:23—use a little wine i.e., use the wine expediently. That being said, don’t over indulge in the wine to the point that you are brought under its power.
- Is it ever expedient or profitable for a believer to be drunk?
 - Ephesians 5:18
- What the problem with drunkenness for a believer? It’s that the believer in such cases is brought under the power of the alcohol.
- What are you allowing to have power over you?
- I Corinthians 10:23—just because something is lawful does not mean that it is good for your edification.
- As believers we need to get past the question of is something lawful or permissible and deal with the following questions instead:
 - Is it expedient? Is it profitable?
 - Does it edify?
 - Am I allowing it to have power over me?
- Romans 12:1-2