

Life Sunday 2014 – L.I.F.E – Living In Faith Everyday

Sermon Title: Chastity: The Choice of Champions

Based on 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Author: Rev. Dr. James Lamb, Executive Director, Lutherans For Life, Nevada, Iowa

### **Introduction**

In our society, we do not always see the words “chastity” and “champion” used together. Many sports champions, for example, do not model a “chaste and decent” life. As Christians, however, we can use these words together. Today, God’s Word reminds us that God makes us champions in Jesus Christ which moves us to live in faith every day honoring Him and others as we live in chastity.

### **What is Chastity?**

So, what is chastity? Chastity is the positive way champions choose to live in faith both outside and inside of marriage. In our text, Paul says, “**Flee from sexual immorality**” (v 18). Chastity certainly includes such “fleeing.” But chastity includes more than *not doing* immoral acts such as is implied in the word “abstinence.” Don’t get me wrong, abstinence is a good thing. But chastity is a better thing! Chastity involves *doing* that which is good, that which honors or glorifies “**God in your body**” (v 20). Chastity is a *positive* choice that champions can make.

Outside of marriage, then, we can define chastity as honoring God in choosing to love your future spouse by saving the use of God’s gift of sexuality until marriage. Think of that, you who are not yet married! You can love your future spouse, even though you may not even know who that will be, by waiting for sexual activity until marriage! What a positive, God-honoring choice!

Inside of marriage, chastity is honoring God by being faithful to your spouse. You love your spouse by reserving sexual activity for that person and that person alone. What a positive, God-honoring choice this is as well!

By framing chastity as a positive choice does not imply it’s an easy choice. It isn’t, especially for those outside of marriage. You get signals from inside your bodies and all kinds of pressure from society everywhere you turn. As one young person said, “Movies, magazines, advertising—it’s all about sex.” Chastity isn’t easy. Chastity isn’t for wimps! Chastity is the choice of champions! And we sure need more champions in our world today.

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### **The Need for Champions**

Paul knew about the need for champions as he wrote to the Corinthians. Sexual immorality abounded. The Corinthians worshiped Aphrodite, the goddess of sex and love. Such worship included the use of prostitutes. People saw nothing wrong with how they used their bodies.

Paul's concern in our text, however, does not focus upon Corinthian society but upon the influence that society had on the Corinthian Christians. **“All things are lawful for me”** (v 12) seemed to be a slogan Christians used to justify immoral behavior. They evidently misapplied Paul's teaching that Christians are free from the law in Christ. They thought it meant they could do anything they desired! The Corinthian Christians tried to justify doing whatever they wanted with their bodies with another slogan, **“Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food”** (v 13), as if the physical act of sex was no different than the physical act of eating. They tried to justify that you could be a Christian and at the same time participate in sexual immorality.

“Movies, magazines, advertising—it's all about sex,” said the young person. How true! We live in a society that, like Corinth, is permeated with immoral sexual images and practices. That's bad! What's worse is the influence such a society has on Christians. But worst of all is that Christians, like in Corinth, try to justify such sexual immorality as acceptable. Society's influence on the Christians goes beyond, “Yeah, I know this is wrong, but everyone's doing it” to “This isn't wrong.” Christians say, “Homosexuality isn't wrong.” Christians say, “Sex outside of marriage isn't wrong.” Christians say, “I have a right to do what I want with my own body.”

Paul boldly says to the Corinthian Christians and to modern Christians, “Never!” **“Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never!”** (v 15). How dare we profane Christ by profaning the members of His body! How dare we call such profanity right!

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There is a great need in our society for some influence that goes the other way, from Christians to fellow Christians and from Christians to society. There is a great need for some champions to practice and model the choice of chastity.

### **What Makes Us Champions?**

We have used the word “champion” frequently. It’s time to ask, “What makes us champions?” What enables us to choose, practice, and model chastity? In sports, being a champion depends upon what we do—the work and effort we put in to gain the strength and endurance and skills necessary to rise above the ordinary and be a champion. In Christianity being a champion depends upon what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. Through Him, Paul says in chapter 15, God “gives us the victory” (v 57). Through Him, Paul says in Romans, “We are more than conquerors” (8:37).

Our text reminds us of the effort and strength and endurance that Jesus used to make us champions who can choose chastity. **“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?”** (19). God does not live just anywhere. A holy God can only live in a holy place. Indeed, in the Old Testament temple, He did not live in the holy place but in the “holy of holies”! Our bodies were anything but a holy place let alone a “holy of holies.” We were conceived and born in sin (Psalm 51:5). Paul writes, **“I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh”** (Romans 7:18). If a holy God is going to live in us, some major cleansing needs to be done!

It has been done! **“You are not your own, for you were bought with a price”** (vv 19b-20). That price was the price of cleansing. That price was the blood of Christ. Only His blood could cleanse us from our immoral deeds, our immoral character, and our immoral nature. Only His blood could pay a sufficient price to turn a filthy earthen vessel into a temple fit for the King of Kings. Our bodies belong to God. We are holy temples of God.

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Having bought us with a price, God now unites us. Paul reminds us that together we make up the body of Christ (v 15). Our individual bodies make up His body. We are His hands and feet, His mouth and eyes. We are holy temples of the Spirit of Christ comprising the body of Christ living in faith every day.

And there is more. Paul reminds us, “**And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power**” (v 14). Death will come to our bodies, but death will never triumph over our bodies. Christ was the first raised by the power of God never to die again. He will not be the last. The bodies God bought and cleansed, the bodies that were His temple, the bodies that were His body on earth will be raised and never die again! A body worth raising is the body of a champion!

God’s actions—purchasing, cleansing, indwelling, uniting, raising—make us champions! God’s actions give value and dignity and honor to our bodies. God’s actions move us to choose to live as champions as we honor Him with our bodies.

### **Chastity the Choice of Champions**

Chastity is the choice of champions. It is a positive way we choose to live in faith inside and outside of marriage. Chastity is a way of glorifying and honoring God in our bodies (v 20). A word to you young people: Sometimes we adults treat you as if you are nothing but a bunch of raging hormones with zits! We treat you and other singles as if you cannot make good, God-pleasing decisions. But you can! You can because God made you a champion!

We often try to motivate young people and singles to make good decisions by listing all the terrible diseases and emotional problems that can develop from immoral sexual activity. Our message comes across, “Don’t do this because it’s bad and bad things might happen!” While it is important to understand the consequences of immoral behavior, we have a more powerful message. “You don’t have to do this because God is good!” God demonstrated His goodness to us through the cross of Jesus. He declares us to “be good” through the merits of Jesus. He purchased

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us through the blood of Jesus. We belong to Him body and soul. His Spirit lives within us. God is good and the positive choice of chastity honors Him and His goodness.

The positive choice of chastity also honors one another. Under the Fourth Commandment in the Large Catechism, Luther writes, “For it is a much greater thing to honor than to love. Honor includes not only love but also deference, humility, and modesty, directed (so to speak) toward a majesty hidden within them.” (Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959]379) This deals with those in authority over us, but it can also be applied to the choice of chastity.

Chastity honors others because of a “majesty hidden within them.” We honor others when we see in them the value and dignity God gives to every human body through His creative hands. “**Your hands fashioned and made me**” (Job 10:8) and “**You knitted me together in my mother’s womb**” (Psalm 139:13) refer to everyone’s body. We honor God when we honor others and their bodies as the work of His hands. Respecting the work of God’s hands in others is a choice champions can make.

Chastity honors others because of a “majesty hidden within them.” We honor fellow Christians when we see in them the value and dignity God gives by making their bodies temples of His Spirit. In Romans, Paul asks Christians to “**Outdo one another in showing honor**” (12:10). God gives Christians a reason for honoring others and their bodies no one else on the planet has! Respecting fellow Christians as temples of the Holy Spirit is a choice champions can make.

It may not always be true in the sports world, but for the Christian, “chastity” and “champion” do go together. God makes us champions through Jesus Christ. Champions can make good decisions that honor God. Champions can make good decisions that honor others.

Champions can be a positive influence and bring change within the Church and into society.

Chastity! It is the choice of champions. Amen.