



1 Corinthians 6:12

(12) All things *that* are lawful *are permitted* to me, but all things *that are lawful* are not beneficial; all things *that* are lawful *are permitted* to me, but I will not be mastered by anything.

A Faithful Version

The apostle Paul tells us in [Romans 14:23](#), “Whatever is not from [faith](#) is sin.” This indicates that there is more to Christian living than merely following rules. It is key for a Christian to understand the *principles* involved in God's laws, not just the letter-of-the-law wording.

Those in [the world](#) argue that the law is done away altogether, and believing this, they find numerous gray areas. To support this belief they will use [1 Corinthians 6:12](#). However, just a few verses earlier, he seems to say something totally different! Notice verses 9-10:

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the [kingdom of God](#)? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

Paul does not intend for this list to encompass every [sin](#) possible, but he does cover a lot of ground. In addition, he begins verse 9 with “the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom,” which casts a wide net. So if fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, the covetous, and drunkards will not enter the Kingdom of [God](#), how then can all things be lawful?

Verse 12, we find, is a poor translation. Paul is paraphrasing what some people were saying—and still say today. Notice that he repeats “all things are lawful for me, but . . .,” following each phrase with an objection. *The Contemporary English Version* renders

The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for 1 Corinthians 6:12 (<http://www.theberean.org>) verse 12 as, “Some of you say, 'We can do anything we want to.' But I tell you that not everything is good for us. So I refuse to let anything have power over me.” *The New International Version* is similar: “I have the right to do anything,' you say—but not everything is beneficial. 'I have the right to do anything'—but I will not be mastered by anything.” Clearly, Paul is telling us what others have said and giving his response.

We are free-moral agents, in other words. We can make our own decisions. We can sin, if we wish to, but there are consequences. Paul says he refuses to let “anything have power over me.” He implies that he keeps a close watch on his thoughts and actions.

Notice verse 9, again from the *Contemporary English Version*:

Don't you know that evil people won't have a share in the blessings of God's kingdom? Don't fool yourselves! No one who is immoral or worships idols or is unfaithful in marriage or is a pervert or behaves like a homosexual

Are there gray areas here? Not to God, but our definition of “evil people” might be different. Certainly “immoral” is open to wide interpretation these days in the world. To “worship idols” can be looked at in different ways. Is “unfaithful in marriage” just an affair or is it more? Each of us knows exactly what these things mean to us, and that is as it should be. We do not need an exhaustive list, or we should not, of all the possibilities of each category. We should know the principle involved.

This is one reason we do not see many lawyers as members of the church. Lawyers are taught to see *everything* as a gray area. “It depends on what the meaning of the word 'is' is,” as the lawyer Bill Clinton famously said. It seems that, as we grow in the faith, gray areas disappear, and the line becomes clearer. [Satan](#) and his world, on the other hand, are busy blurring the lines, trying to make us feel guilty or prudish if we judge something to be sin and choose not to participate.

I have known ministers who thought they were the town sheriff and had to be in on all decisions in our lives. Others, though, taught the principles involved and left it to church members to make decisions for themselves. Once our teachers have taught us God's way, the burden is on *us*, not them, to know right from wrong. We must know where the lines are.

— Mike Ford

To learn more, see:

The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for 1 Corinthians 6:12 (<http://www.theberean.org>)

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