

1 Corinthians 6:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient (panta moi exestin, all' ou panta sympherei, πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν, ἀλλ' οὐ πάντα συμφέρει). Paul quotes a Corinthian slogan ('all things are lawful')—likely their distortion of his gospel freedom—then qualifies it. Exestin (ἔξεστιν, 'it is permissible') refers to things not explicitly forbidden, but sympherei (συμφέρει, 'beneficial, profitable') introduces wisdom: legality isn't the only criterion.

The second qualification: **all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any** (panta moi exestin, all' ouk egō exousiasthēsomai hypo tinos, πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐγὼ ἐξουσιασθήσομαι ὑπό τινος). Exousiasthēsomai is wordplay on exestin—'I will not be mastered/enslaved.' Christian liberty paradox: freedom means not being enslaved to freedom itself! Permissible things (food, sex, drink) become idols when they master us.

Historical Context

The Corinthians' 'all things are lawful' likely justified temple feasts (8:10) and sexual libertinism. They treated Christian freedom as license—a problem Paul addresses throughout the letter. Roman Corinth prized sophisticated pleasure; Stoics preached self-control. Paul offers a third way: freedom in Christ means serving others (Galatians 5:13) and mastering appetites rather than being mastered by them. True freedom is self-governance under the Spirit.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What permissible activities or pleasures have you allowed to 'master' you—even though they're not explicitly sinful?
2. How does the question 'Is it beneficial?' add a layer of discernment beyond 'Is it permitted?'
3. In what areas of life are you using Christian freedom as an excuse for self-indulgence rather than service to others?

Interlinear Text

πάντα	μοι	ἔξεστιν	ἀλλ'	οὐκ	πάντα	συμφέρει	πάντα
All things	for me	are lawful	but	not	All things	are	All things
G3956	G3427	G1832	G235	G3756	G3956	G4851	G3956

μοι	ἔξεστιν	ἀλλ'	οὐκ	ἐγὼ	ἐξουσιασθήσομαι	ὑπό
for me	are lawful	but	not	I	be brought under the power	of
G3427	G1832	G235	G3756	G1473	G1850	G5259

τινος
any
G5100

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 9:27 (Parallel theme): But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

2 Thessalonians 3:9 (Parallel theme): Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.

Jude 1:12 (Parallel theme): These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;

Romans 7:14 (Word): For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

1 Corinthians 8:4 (Parallel theme): As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.

1 Corinthians 9:12 (Parallel theme): If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.