

# **On Pimps**

The Emperor Justinian



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The name and calling of pimp was so odious both to the ancient laws and to those of the Empire that many legal enactments have been published against persons committing offences of this description. We, ourselves, have already promulgated a constitution increasing the penalties against those who are guilty of such wicked deeds, and we have, in addition, supplied by other laws what our predecessors omitted, and have by no means lost sight of this matter, for we have very recently been informed of the evil consequences which such traffic has caused in this great city.

We are aware that certain people live illicitly, that they find opportunity for themselves for dishonourable wealth by cruel and hateful means. They travel around the provinces and many other places, and they deceive wretched girls promising them shoes and clothing. With these they buy them and lead them back to this most blessed city. They keep them in their homes, and give them wretched food and clothes and then hand them over to those desiring them for their pleasure. They themselves receive the shameful income earned from the bodies of the girls. They draw up agreements so that the girls will maintain this wicked and criminal occupation so long as their keepers wish. Some of these women also take sureties.

They pursue this criminal activity so in almost all of this regal city, as well as in the countries beyond seas; and (what is worse) houses of this kind exist in close proximity to holy places and religious establishments; and at the present time this wickedness is so prevalent that any persons who wish to withdraw these unhappy girls from the life that they are leading, and legally marry them, are not permitted to do so.

Some of these wretches are so unprincipled as to deliver over to corruption girls who have not yet reached their tenth year, and in order to ransom these unhappy beings for the purpose of contracting lawful marriage, great sums of money are exacted. Ten thousand means of effecting their ruin exist which are not susceptible of being described in words; and the resulting evil is so great, and the cruelty so widespread that, while it first was confined to the most remote parts of the capital, it now not only extends over the city itself but also over all its suburbs.

A certain person informed us in secret of this condition of affair some time ago, and recently the most excellent Praetors have been directed by us to make inquiry concerning it, which they have done, and made their reports to us, and we immediately afterwards deemed it necessary to implore the assistance of God, and purge the city quickly of this iniquity.

Therefore we direct all persons to live as chastely as possible, which, with confidence in God, can alone profit the souls of men. ... We absolutely forbid any women to lend by artifice, fraud, or compulsion to such debauchery; it is permitted to no one to support a prostitute or to prostitute them publicly, and to use the profits for any other business; we forbid them to undertake agreements for this and to require sureties and to do any such thing which compel the wretched women unwillingly to destroy their chastity.

Nor shall it hereafter be lawful to deceive young girls, and induce them to prostitute themselves by promising them clothing, food, and ornaments.

We strictly prohibit all these things; and, after having considered the subject carefully, we direct that any bonds which may have been executed to secure the performance of such contracts shall be of no effect; and that those who are guilty cannot recover any gifts which they may have made to the girls with whom the said contracts were made; and that they themselves shall be expelled from this most fortunate city as pestiferous persons, and destroyers of public morals, because of having reduced free women to slavery by requiring them to lead a licentious life and bringing them up for promiscuous debauchery.

Hence we decree that if anyone should hereafter remove a girl against her will, and compel her to remain with him, and, without providing her with sufficient food, to appropriate for himself the wages of her prostitution; he shall be arrested by the respectable Praetors of the People of this most blessed city, and condemned to death. We

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have already entrusted the Praetors of the People with the prosecution of persons guilty of pecuniary theft and robbery; and there is not much more reason for us to do so where crimes against chastity are concerned? If any owner of a house should rent it to a pimp for this purpose, and, knowing who he is, should not eject him; he shall be sentenced to pay a fine of a hundred pounds of gold, and shall risk losing his house. If anyone hereafter should draw up an agreement in writing as evidence of a contract of this kind, and receive a surety with reference the same, he is hereby notified that he will not be benefited in any way either by the obligation of the girl, or by that of her surety; for as her agreement is void in every respect, her surety will, under no circumstances, incur any liability. The guilty person shall, as we have already stated, undergo corporeal punishment, and shall be expelled far from this great city. We exhort the women of our Empire to remain chaste, and not to allow themselves to be persuaded or compelled to embrace a life of debauchery; we absolutely prohibit pimping, and when it is committed, we shall punish it.