
How Should We Then Live (Part 1)

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

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Introduction

This morning we resume a 2-week series we began last week with Pastor Dale entitled *Full-Bodied Faith*. The purpose of this series is to teach a biblical view of the physical body and its role in the Christian life. If I were to summarize last week's messages very concisely, it would sound something like this:

First, "you" and "your body" are one. Although you can be separated from your body, it is wholly part of you (dualistic holism) This is God's good design both for this life and the one to come.

Second, to say that "we" must be saved from the penalty for sin is to say that everything about us, including our bodies, must be saved. God is both a loving Father *and* a just judge. Because our bodies are involved in sin, our bodies are due God's punishment.

Third, because our whole selves are condemned in sin, we need to be wholly saved. As I said, God is a just God. If the whole man is guilty of sin, than a whole man must die for that sin. There are no options, no plea bargains, no lightening of the sentence. Hence, we need a savior who is like us in his composition. We need a whole man substitute.

Fourth, praise our merciful God, we have such a savior. How so? Incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension. Christ's **incarnation** – that is his taking on a human body beginning with his life on earth and his living in a way that perfectly pleased and glorified God as a physical man; his **crucifixion** – that is his physical death on the cross for our sins, as our whole man substitute; and his **resurrection and ascension** – that is his physical resurrection to a redeemed body and his embodied life now and forevermore at God's right hand; incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension ensure us that we (the whole of us) can be saved for this life and the life to come.

Fifth and finally, what you do with and through your body matters to God. Christ, the living Word, is our example of how to live our "embodied" lives for God's glory.

There is a chance that some of you found last week's messages difficult and were really wanting to hear this week's messages so that you could just be told what to do. My dear friends, beware of that kind of thinking – for in it often resides a root of legalism. Don't give me Jesus – instead, give me a bracelet that reads WWJD. God's agenda is so much larger than that.

Among our top desires as pastors for you here at the Chapel is that you would be increasingly characterized as people who *consider carefully, deeply* the things of the Word, realiz-

ing that *your heart* (not your actions) is the grand central station of your life, and that *acting and behaving wisely* in life only happens when the Word, rightly understood, flows from Grand Central Station into the many, many, trains leaving that day. This is why you rarely hear a simple “how to” sermon here at the Chapel – and when you do, it should have always been preceded by the exposition of the Scripture, unpacking the gospel and who you are in light of it – that is, its meaning for your all of your life... (e.g. Ephesians series).

One last word by way of introduction and then we will move to our text for this morning. I’m going to be speaking fairly directly to sins, especially this evening, which many Christians consider off limits for the pulpit. For example... Gluttony, vanity as a form of pride, and sloth and laziness

If, and perhaps when, I offend you, please discern whether the offense is caused by the gospel or by me. If by the gospel, take it up with the Lord in prayer, study, and conversations with trusted, mature, brothers and sisters. If by me, please come to me that I may seek your forgiveness.

Please turn to 1 Corinthians 6:12-20.

Background

By way of background, we want to briefly set the stage. In 1 Corinthians, Paul is returning a letter from the church in Corinth. In this particular portion of his letter, he is addressing a list of issues that he had likely had several exchanges with the Corinthian Christians about. We are tackling this passage not so much because sexual immorality is our chief interest today but because this passage lays out at the principle level a biblical view of our physical bodies. But to rightly understand this, we must arrive at the principles in their original contexts. At this particular point in the letter, Paul is addressing the belief of some of those in the Corinthian church that it was “okay” for them to go to prostitutes. In their previous letter to Paul, they had apparently argued that it mattered little what they did with their physical bodies, that the matter of going to prostitutes was not significant, and inferred that the relationship between their bodies and Christ’s work was of no consequence.

As we go forward into this discussion, note that our text is bookended by two further discussions on sexuality. Chapter 5 directly addresses an abuse of sexuality that is *dis-pleasing* to God: A man sleeping with a woman who is not his wife. Chapter 7 deals with a right use of sexuality that is *pleasing* to God: A man and woman giving freely of themselves to one another in marriage. Right in between we have Chapter 6 verses 12-20, describing how it is Christians – *who were sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God* (v.11) should regard their bodies – especially (but not exclusively) when it comes to sexuality. This passage is probably the most informative and instructive passage in all of the New Testament with regards to the believer’s physical body and its place in gospel living.

Paul's Response to the Corinthians

As Paul begins this argument with the Corinthians, let me give you a peek ahead to the conclusion. Verses 19b and 20 read: *You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.* Knowing this is the main point of the argument, you can read the entire passage understanding what he is building his argument toward demonstrating. So let's begin by reading vv. 12-14 together [READ]

You Said, But I Say... (x3) (v. 12-14)

In these verses you will note that there are phrases in quotation marks. These are the phrases that most likely are quotes directly from the Corinthian's letter to Paul. The first two quotes are the same: The Corinthians were telling Paul that, "*All things are lawful for me,*" or as another translation puts it, "*I have the right to do anything.*" As we will discover later in this passage, the Corinthians are making this claim with reference to their physical bodies.

What does this mean? The Corinthians were arguing that what they did with their bodies was their own business and quite unrelated to their spirituality. This kind of thinking has been referred to as "dualism" (a bit different than the dualistic holism that Pastor Dale spoke about last week) meaning that the body and the soul are two separate things. You may have heard of the expression, *the ghost in the machine*.¹ The soul is the real you and your body is simply the machine it is trapped inside. As you can imagine, living this way could lead to all kinds of sins that include rejecting, punishing, subduing, or indulging the body because it is of no significance and has nothing to do with the "real" me. This way of thinking about the world originated with the Greeks and heavily influenced the Corinthians. You might think this sounds foolish or unrelated to our modern lifestyle. But as we will discuss later, I think a kind of subtle dualism is alive and well among Christians.

Paul has two responses to this position of the Corinthians. First he says, "but not all things are helpful (v.12)." We know from other uses of this phrase in 1 Corinthians he is referring specifically to the help or the benefit of others.² 1 Corinthians 10:23 says, "*All things are lawful, but not all things are helpful. 'All things are lawful,' but not all things build up. Let no one seek his own good but the good of his neighbor.*" Sexual immorality, whether it be engaging prostitutes or any other form, harms others. "Truly Christian conduct is not predicated on whether I have the right to do something, but whether my conduct is helpful to those about me."³ The Corinthians were wrong because their use of their bodies harmed others... certainly the individuals directly affected, but also the believers' corporate identity of the church was damaged and thereby Christ's glory was stolen.

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Ghost_in_the_Machine

² See 1 Corinthians 10:23, 12:7

³ Fee, G. D., *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987). See also

Second Paul says in response to the Corinthians contention that all things are lawful, **“but I will not be enslaved by anything (v.12).”** So here is a paradox – the Corinthians are busy telling Paul, “We are *free* to do anything! After all, it’s just our bodies!” Paul says, “No, you are not free. In fact you are fooling yourselves because you are enslaved.” How so? Probably in at least two ways. Specific to this passage, those who engage prostitutes become one with them, allowing their bodies to be mastered or enslaved by, placed into the power of, another (who is not their spouse, cf. 7:1ff). More generally, they are enslaved to sin. Jesus says in John 8:34, **“Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.”** The freedom that a believer has is the freedom *from* sin, the freedom to *obey* from the heart. The Corinthians in their high opinion of themselves thought they could do anything they wanted with their body. They were wrong.

Paul goes on to respond to a final quote from the Corinthian’s letter. They said, **“Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food... (v.13)”** and by implication, both will be destroyed anyway, so what does it matter? Their point being that in a similar way, the body was for sex and sex for the body and both will be destroyed anyway, so what does it matter? Paul refuses to let the Corinthians draw these conclusions. He rejects both inferences. Just as with the earlier quote – the Corinthians’ theology about their body is simply wrong. They continue to think the body has nothing to do with their lives in Christ. He corrects them forcefully and straightforwardly: “The body is not for [sexual immorality] but for the Lord; and it is not destined for destruction but for resurrection, the proof of which is Christ’s resurrection.”⁴ Here again, similar to 1 Corinthians 15 that Pastor Dale preached last week – the bodily resurrection of Christ plays heavily into how we think about our bodies... they are not throw away shells. “It is in [our] bodily obedience [that]... the lordship of Christ finds visible expression [in our lives].”⁵ And it is in the raising, redeeming, and replacing of our bodies that the reality of the resurrection and the glory of the gospel is fully validated.⁶

Do You Not Know... ? (x3) (v. 15-20)

Now that Paul has dealt directly with the words that the Corinthians had used to support their promiscuity, he turns his attention to what is missing in their understanding (that is their theology) when it comes to their physical bodies. He does so using three questions all of which are set up with the phrase, “Do you not know...” [READ v.15]

The first, “Do you not know...”(v.15) is the natural extension of what he has just stated in vv. 13-14, **“The body... is meant for the Lord... [it will be raised up] by his power.”** Christ’s bodily resurrection set into motion the reality of *our* bodily resurrection – our bodies are therefore “for the Lord” (v.13) because he has redeemed them. Through the resurrection we are made “members of Christ.” Not members like “members of a club”,

⁴ Fee, G. D., *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987). (p.257)

⁵ Ciampa, R. E. & Rosner, B.S., *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010). (p. 255)

⁶ See 1 Corinthians 15, especially vv. 15-19, 31-32

but members like organs and limbs. Through our redemption, Christ has laid claim to all of us and placed us “in Him.” Hence, Paul’s incredulity can be appreciated: “Would you really take yourself, parts of Christ’s body, and join with a prostitute? Never! While there are no perfect earthly comparisons, you can think of this as going the Louvre, the famous art museum in Paris, France, and pulling out a can of spray paint and spraying it all over the Mona Lisa. And when the cops come to take you away, proclaiming, it wasn’t me! It was my hand that did it! You see, to be a Christian, is to be a limb of the body of Christ. Whatever your body does, it does as a limb of Christ. Can you see why Paul is so emphatic?

The second “Do you not know...” in verse 16 builds on the first and further develops Paul’s view of the believer’s body. [READ v. 16-18]. First, Paul takes us back all the way to Genesis 2:24 to explain how it is joining oneself with a prostitute makes the individual “one body with her.” From the very beginning of the human race, God gave sex within marriage a very special and unique function – while it is a physical act, it represents more than a physical union between a man and a woman... *And the two shall become one.* This unique union was to be made and enjoyed only in marriage. And this unique union is an earthly picture of a much greater reality, identified in verse 17 – *but he who is joined to the Lord becomes one Spirit with him.*⁷ The point here is similar to the above. But instead of identifying the believer’s status as a “member of Christ,” Paul now tells the Corinthians that they are in spiritual union with Christ. This union is to dispel all union with the realm of darkness – even in the bodily, physical realm, and the prostitute is a case in point.⁸

Hence, Paul urges those who are in union with Christ, to *Flee from sexual immorality!* This plea and command calls the believers to recognize their union with Christ as being applied to ALL aspects of their lives and beings, including their physical bodies. There is a follow up warning here and it has everything to do with God’s design in creation and nothing to do with the mystical ideas about sex and what it accomplishes between two people that often wander about in the heads of teenagers and young adults (*– thoughts that their parents through careful teaching should have put to rest through repeated teaching over the course of their children’s rearing*). The reason that sexual sin is singled out here as different than other sins is simply because of what has already been stated when Paul quoted Genesis 2:24. When the believer abuses the good intent of sex (which happens whenever sex occurs outside of marriage), it directly competes with their union with Christ because it has the effect of placing their bodies into union, under the mastery of, someone else (the non-spouse participant) and something else (sin) other than Christ.⁹ But the believer’s body is under the authority of Christ the Lord (vv. 12-15), is the temple of the Holy Spirit (v.19), and was purchased by God (v.20). Such competition should not exist and this is why sexual sin is a sin against “your body”... be-

⁷ See Romans 8:9-11, Ephesians 5:31-32

⁸ Romans 6:1-14

⁹ see 1 Corinthians 7

cause “your body” is not your own. (commentary: fallacy of marrying because you had premarital sex or became pregnant prior to marriage)

Which brings us to our last “Do you not know...” and the summary of Paul’s argument [READ vv. 19-20]. He has dealt with the Corinthians wrong theology about the body, he has explained their bodies are members of Christ, he has explained their bodies’ involvement in essential union with Christ, and now, he plays the trump card. Paul makes a very explicit argument for their bodies’ ownership by Christ. He first explains that the believer’s body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Earlier in this letter, Paul says this, *Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwell in you?* (3:16). There he was speaking to the church as a whole. He takes this same thought here, however, and reapplies it at the individual level by describing the believer’s body as the *place* where the Holy Spirit is housed. The temple, where the Spirit of God dwelt in Old Testament times, was to bring glory to God and to sanctify his name. Now, the believer’s body, along with the church, takes on this function – adding a heavy significance to the believer’s use of their body and the imperative to not sin against it. As such, there is a new master of the house. And this new master has paid a high cost for his purchase. He paid his life on the cross. Christ was crucified to purchase our redemption – and this redemption, as demonstrated by the resurrection, includes our bodies. Therefore Paul says, *You are not your own... So glorify God in your body.* Beloved, your body, your *embodied* existence, is extremely important and we need to think carefully, therefore, about how we use our bodies. Which brings us to our conclusion – how does this understanding of our bodies apply to day to day life?

Principles Governing Our View Of, and Practices With, Our Bodies

I want to leave you with this morning with one major overarching principle and several minor consequent principles gleaned from 1 Corinthians 6 that we will use as the foundation for this evening when we will make applications to two areas specifically: eating and exercise.

Major Overarching Principle: You are not your own... So glorify God in your body. Many of us, I suspect, live with vague forms of unarticulated dualism – that is, not regarding our bodies as being integral to our Christian lives. As a result, we eat too much or too little. We exercise too much or too little. Sinful patterns and choices dominate through legalism, licentiousness, and poor stewardship. Hopefully, after last week’s sermons and this morning’s sermon you are convinced that your physical body is part of how you make glory for God, or steal glory from God.

Minor Consequent Principles. There are other principles that flow from 1 Corinthians 6 and are grounded in additional passages.¹⁰ They help to unpack and guide our thinking in wisdom with respect to how we use our body. Three that we will mention here:

¹⁰ Add Ephesians 5:18, Galatians 5:23, Ephesians 4:28, Matthew 6:24, Titus 2:11-13, 1 Corinthians 10:23-24,

- *Use your body to benefit, not harm, God's people.* For example, lifestyle choices we make have both short-term and long-term consequences for our ability to be of service to our families and our church.
- *In exercising your freedom as a believer, do not become enslaved to anything but Christ.* For example, we know from both Peter and Paul that no foods or beverages are off limits to the believer. However, when we become enslaved/addicted to certain kinds of food, or certain amounts of food, or we take part of such things to the harm of others, we venture into practices which may compromise our commitment to Christ.
- *What you do with your body, you do with Jesus.* Lastly, there ought to be a continual awareness that what we choose to do with our bodies, we do with a body that Christ has purchased and redeemed at high cost. In fact, God has placed his Spirit into our bodies, designating them as temples. When standing in the mirror to either gloat over or despise our bodies, we must be conscious that what we do is done with the body that Christ purchased at high cost and died for... we are members of Christ's body.

I hope you come back tonight. We have much more to think over together. Let's Pray.

Conclusion

