

My Body Belongs to God

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Introduction: One of God's most precious gifts to human persons is the gift of the body. In Psalm 139:14, King David says we "have been remarkably and wondrously made." Here, in 1 Corinthians 6:14-15 Paul says the Lord is "for the body" and that he will resurrect our bodies by his power. In chapter 15 Paul tells us that someday God will give us a glorified body that is incorruptible, immortal, powerful, spiritual, and heavenly. First John 3:2 provides the capstone to the future destiny of our bodies when it tells us that when we see Jesus, "we will be like him because we will see him as he is." It then adds our proper response to such an incredible promise, "everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself just as he is pure."

God is clearly not indifferent to our bodies. They matter to him, and they matter a lot. How much do they matter? He paid for them through the death of His Son that He might come to live in them as His temple (1 Cor. 6:19-20). When God saves us, he saves all of us! He saves us body, soul and spirit (1 Thess. 5:23).

Unfortunately, many of us have forgotten, or at least neglected, this wonderful truth by the way we handle our bodies. We are 21st century Corinthians who believe the body counts for nothing. I can do what I want with it. Even sexual immorality, at least to God, is not a big deal. It is not sin. Paul will respond with

conviction and clarity, telling them they could not be more wrong. John Piper helps set the table for our study when he says, “Some of the Corinthians had a view of the body that made what they did with it morally indifferent. In 1 Corinthians 5:2 they actually boasted about an act of incest in the church. In 11:21 some of them even got drunk at the Lord’s Supper. They reasoned: the body and food and drink and sex are going to be destroyed in the end. There will only be free spirits. So, the body does not matter. You can eat and drink and have sex any way you like because the body is morally irrelevant. It’s what you know and think that really counts (8:1-3).

Paul opposed this view with all his might. He gave them a new and radically different slogan: “The body is for the Lord and the Lord is for the body.” The body is not just going to be destroyed; it is going to be raised. The body is not morally indifferent. It is for the glory of God.” (“I Will Not Be Enslaved by Anything,” 9-1-85).

In the passage before us, Paul lays out 5 principles that will guide us in glorifying God in our body. The body is a great gift from a great God. We must use it wisely and well.

I. God has principles for my body

6:12-13

Two words or phrases control the argument of verses 12-20: “sexual immorality” (Gr. *porneia*) which occurs three times (vv. 13, 18 twice, cf. v. 9) and “body” (Gr. *soma*) which occurs eight times (vv. 13 twice, 15, 16, 18 twice, 19, 20). Further, the phrase “do you not know” (*ESV*) occurs three times (vv. 15, 16, 19) and a total of six times in chapter 6. What you do not know about your body and sexual immorality can hurt you. It can be dangerous to your spiritual health. Paul immediately begins by correcting the Corinthians faulty theology.

The phrase “Everything is permissible for me” is almost certainly a Corinthian slogan. It possibly reflects a faulty understanding of grace and liberty in Christ (Fee, *1 Cor.* NICNT, 278). Paul counterpunches with a double response:

- 1) “Not everything is beneficial” (*ESV*, “helpful”)
- 2) “I will not be mastered (*ESV*, “enslaved”) by anything.”

Before I speak or act, I must ask, is it beneficial? Helpful? Will it build me and others up in Christ? Is this a good thing to do for the kingdom of my Lord?

Further, I must ask, can this activity take mastery over me? Enslave me? Can it bring me into spiritual, emotional, physical or psychological bondage?

Paul continues his argument in verse 13, prefacing it again by a Corinthian slogan. The slogan: ““food is for the stomach and the stomach for food,” and God will do away with both of them.” I strongly suspect this was an extension

of another popular saying, “sex for the body and the body for sex and God will do away with both of them.” Paul once more fires back with a corrective that is grounded in the theology of the body (v. 13) and the resurrection (v. 14).

- “However, the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.” God is pro-body! He made it. He designed it. It is valuable and important!

It is a good thing when used rightly for his glory. This does not include sexual immorality. Paul Gardner says, “Paul insists that sexual immorality is totally inconsistent with God’s design for the body – a body that will eventually be raised and is designed for union with God” (*1 Cor.* ZECNT, 278). The nature of the sexual immorality is not specified. It may involve prostitution, adultery or even homosexuality (v. 9). Whatever its nature, it violated the marriage bed and covenant God designed for a man and woman. Paul teaches us the body is good and sex is good when used as God intended (cf. ch. 7). I like how Warren Wiersbe puts it, “Sensuality is to sex what gluttony is to eating; both are sinful and both bring disastrous consequences.... Sex outside of [heterosexual] marriage is destructive, while sex in marriage can be creative and beautiful” (*Be Wise*, 79).

II. God has plans for my body

6:13-14

Paul continues his theology of the body by wedding the present to the future, sanctification to glorification. In the present we must remember that our bodies are for the Lord (v. 13). Indeed, we are encouraged to “present [our] bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God” (Rom. 12:1). The Lord is “for the body.” He saved you to use you for His glory (v. 20) and for your good. Never think your body is of little or no consequence. It is important. How important? Look at what God is going to do with it! “God raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by his power” (v. 14). Curtis Vaughn is exactly right, “the fact of the Resurrection shows the importance of the body” (*1 Cor.* BSC, 65). The resurrection of Jesus is a foretaste and preview of our bodily resurrection. There is a glorified God-man on the throne in heaven and there will be glorified bodies filling the kingdom for all of eternity. Our bodies are not finally destined to be eaten by worms. They are headed to a New Heaven, New Earth and New Jerusalem (Rev. 21-22). Death is not the final word for the Christian. A resurrected and glorified body is. Piper again puts it so well: “Just as he raised Jesus from the dead and gave him an everlasting resurrection body, so he will raise our bodies from the dead and make them new and whole – with no more pain, no more deformity, no more disability, no more sexual disorientation, no more chemical imbalances, no more insomnia, no more disease of any kind. You will shine like the sun in the kingdom of your Father

(Matthew 13:43).” (“You Were Bought with a Price: Glorify God with Your Bodies,” 11-22-92).

Where we are headed in the future should impact how we live today. What God will do with my body in the future should affect what I do with it today. He has a plan for now and forever! Let that truth make a difference.

III. God has protection for my body

6:15-18

Paul moves from our resurrection with Christ to our union with Christ. His argument is deeply moving and powerfully convicting. For the first time in verses 12-20 he uses the rhetorical phrase, “Don’t you know” (*ESV*, “Do you not know”). Have the Corinthians forgotten that their “bodies are a part of Christ’s body” (v. 15)? Have they forgotten that they are united to Christ and that what they do in some real and genuine sense now involves him as well? To be specific, should one “take a part of Christ’s body and make it part of a prostitute? Absolutely not” (*ESV*, “Never!”). In fact, driving home how important it is that we treat our bodies well, Paul asks, “Don’t you know that anyone joined to a prostitute in one body with her” (v. 16)? The irrefutable conclusion is that when you join yourself to a prostitute you are also joining Christ to a prostitute! Schreiner’s comments are spot on, “The relationship between believers and Christ is remarkably intimate such that believers represent Christ in what they do with their bodies. Therefore, joining what

belongs to Christ to a *prostitute* is unthinkable and even outrageous” (*1 Cor.*, TNTC, 128).

Paul adds scriptural warrant to his argument in verse 16, quoting Genesis 2:24 in the Creation account, “For Scripture says, the two will become one flesh.”

When God performed the first marriage between Adam and Eve he united them via sexual intimacy as one flesh, one body. This is one reason we save ourselves sexually for marriage. Sexual intercourse is a union. It is reserved exclusively for the married.

Verse 17 instructs us that there is an even greater union and oneness than that which occurs in sexual union in marriage. It is the spiritual union we enjoy with Christ in salvation! “But anyone joined to the Lord is one spirit with him.”

Verlyn Verbrugge puts it well, through conversion and union with Christ, “a believer belongs body, soul and spirit to the one Lord, and any unholy union with anyone else is a betrayal of our union with Christ” (*1 Cor.*, EBC, 312).

Remembering our sacred union with Christ is a powerful protection against sexual immorality. We should keep that truth continually in our mind.

In verse 18 Paul adds a second protection that is both simple and practical. It comes in the form of a present imperative, an ongoing word of command: “Flee sexual immorality!” (cf. 10:14 on idolatry). Perhaps the apostle had in the back of his mind the story of Joseph and Potiphar’s wife as recorded in Genesis 39.

Sexual immorality, in all its forms, is something we should run from as fast as we can. Don't let it even get close to you.

Rick Warren, pastor in California, has what he calls "10 Commandments to Help Church Staff Maintain Moral Integrity." I want to slightly adjust his list so that they might apply to all of us. Certain ones may not as readily apply to the unmarried, though there is wisdom here for them as well.

- 1) Thou shalt not be alone with someone of the opposite sex (including meals).
- 2) Thou shalt not have the opposite sex pick you up or drive you places when it is just the two of you.
- 3) Thou shalt not kiss any attendee of the opposite sex or show affection that could be questioned.
- 4) Thou shalt not visit the opposite sex alone at home.
- 5) Thou shalt not counsel the opposite sex alone including the office, and thou shalt not counsel the opposite sex more than once without that person's mate. Refer them.
- 6) Thou shalt not discuss detailed sexual problems with the opposite sex in counseling. Refer them.
- 7) Thou shalt not discuss your marriage problems with the opposite sex.

- 8) Thou shalt be careful in answering emails, instant messages, chatrooms, cards, or letters from the opposite sex.
- 9) Thou shalt avoid any and all pornography and put in place all necessary protective devices on your phone, iPad and computer.
- 10) Thou shalt pray for the integrity of others, especially fellow staff members.

Paul concludes these verses with an enigmatic statement. It's exact meaning is unclear, but we will give it our best shot. The verse reads, "Every other sin (lit. "every sin") a person commits is outside the body, but the person who is sexually immoral sins against his own body." Because of what we read in the very next verse about our bodies being "the temple of the Holy Spirit," I think Paul's point is this. There is something about sexual sin that scars the soul and impacts the body that goes beyond all other sins. It scars the psyche, wounds our inner person. As Gordon Fee writes, "no other sin is directed specifically toward one's own body in the way that sexual immorality is" (*1 Cor.* NICNT, 290). Calvin adds, sexual immorality "leaves a stain impressed upon the body, such as is not impressed upon it from other sins" (*1 Cor.* 220). Sexual sin is serious business. We must listen to the wise counsel of Scripture that provides the essential protection we need.

For the third time Paul uses the phrase, “Don’t you know...” What is it that he fears we may forget? He fears that we may forget that “our body is a temple (Gr. *naos*) of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God.” (see also 3:16). Our body is important and valuable to God. How important and valuable? At conversion He makes it His home, His temple, His holy place. God could live anywhere, and indeed He lives everywhere. But, when we repent of sin and trust in Christ, in a real and genuine sense God comes to live inside each one of us by His Holy Spirit.

What a blessing to have God living in us! What an honor! What a privilege! What a responsibility! This God, who is for our body, is now in our body and He will never leave it. And don’t miss this. The Holy Spirit coming to live in us is a gift (“whom you have from God”). You did not work for it, and you did not earn it. It is all of grace. You are God’s possession. “You are not your own.” You no longer belong to you. You belong to Him! Eugene Peterson paraphrases it well, “Don’t you see that you can’t live however you please, squandering what God paid such a high price for?... God owns the whole works” (*The Message*). I am indwelt by the God of my salvation. That should make a difference with what I do with my body.

V. God has paid for my body

6:20

Paul's argument for the value and sacredness of the body reaches its climax in verse 20. He grounds it in the cross work of the Lord Jesus. We are not our own (v. 19). We no longer belong to ourselves. We now belong to another who is for us (v. 12) and in us (v. 19). But there is more. He bought us at a price, a great price (v. 20). These words without question point to the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross as our ransom. There He paid the full redemption for our sin in order that 1) we might be forgiven of our sins, 2) God's righteousness and justice would be vindicated, and 3) we might be set free from our enslavement to sin, death, hell and the grave. Paul does not use the words ransom or redemption in this verse, but it is clearly what he has in mind.

Schreiner notes "The word *bought* (*agorazō*) is used elsewhere by Paul to denote the ransoming effect of Christ's sacrifice (1 Cor. 7:23; cf. 2 Pet. 2:1; Rev. 5:9; 14:3; Gal. 3:13; 4:5).... The *price* here is almost certainly the blood of Christ, hence the word 'ransom' nicely captures what is being communicated. Believers have been freed from slavery at the price of Christ blood, and now they belong to God; their bodies are under his lordship (cf. Rom. 6:15-23)" [*1 Cor.*, 149-50].

In light of all of this, there is only one logical and proper response. We must "glorify God with [our] body." Our bodies should be a doxology in response to so great a salvation which we have in Jesus. Curtis Vaughn says, "to glorify

God seeks His honor as the highest goal” (p. 66). Paul will put the capstone on this when he writes in 1 Cor. 10:31, “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.” He owns us. He rightly deserves our best, or all.

Conclusion: It is one of my favorite hymns having sung it since I was a small boy. The chorus is so simple and yet so profound. The 4th stanza, as a whole is a fitting commentary and conclusion to our study:

Jesus Paid It All

And when, before the throne, I stand in Him complete;

“Jesus dies my soul to save,” My lips shall still repeat.

Jesus paid it all, All to Him I owe;

Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow.”