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A1212 – March 18, 2012 – 1 Corinthians 6:12-20
Commit Your Body To The Lord

Open your Bibles to 1 Cor 6 but before we march ahead in our verse by verse there was a good question someone asked that we should answer at this point on the matter of lawsuits in 1 Cor 6:1-11. When a believer wrongs another believer as in verse 7 and takes them before a court of unbelievers Paul said this is a disgrace, “Why not rather be defrauded?” In verse 8 he says, “you yourselves wrong and defraud. You do this even to your brethren.” The question asked was - what should the Church do when a brother has broken civil law in wronging another brother? In other words, when he has violated the governing authorities of the land? What should we do then? For example when one Christian has molested or violated another Christian. To answer this we would say two things. First of all, God has given civil government as the fourth divine institution. Civil government is not an option for the human race, it is a basic structure of society, the purpose of which is to restrain evil, maintain national security and protect the freedom of its citizens. Therefore civil government is divinely ordained and is for the good of all men. And if you do good by obeying the law then you have nothing to worry about. But if you do evil then you have something to worry about because the policeman is an avenger of God who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. So then Paul is not saying that Christians ought to ignore the fourth divine institution of civil government and erect their own legal system. Paul is talking about handling *small* claims within the church and not taking them before the world. As you can see clearly at the end of verse 2, small claims are what Paul has in mind in the context. He says, “If the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? That word “smallest” is *elachistos* and refers to trivial, insignificant matters, something of little importance in the grand scheme of things. And verse 3, the expression “matters of this life” is *biotika* and refers to everyday matters, petty quarrels. And again in verse 4, *biotika*, “matters of this life,” again

pointing to everyday petty quarrels, not grand scale crimes against other believers. And therefore Paul is not addressing issues like a believer raping another believer homosexually or heterosexually, he's not addressing those kinds of crimes. Those crimes need to be handed over to the civil authorities for the sake of the safety of others, Christian and non-Christian alike. The point of Paul's passage is that they were taking one another to courts of law over trivial, insignificant, everyday matters and the ridiculousness of it was a poor reflection on Christ. They didn't have the wisdom to even handle such trivial things. So I hope that clarifies the issue. The procedure should be that the church leadership turn a brother over to the civil authorities for such crimes and not to do so would be remiss because number one, it would it leave others at personal risk and number two, it would disregard the fourth divine institution of civil authority which God ordained for the very purpose of restraining such evil.

Now to 1 Cor 6:9 and following. We have dealt with this most grievous deception that still plagues the church: the deception that a believer who lives an unrighteous lifestyle will inherit the kingdom. They undoubtedly will not. So then to inherit the kingdom must mean something besides entering the kingdom. All who are born again will enter the kingdom. But not all will inherit the kingdom. And here we speak of the millennial kingdom, the future period of Christ's earthly reign on the Davidic throne for a literal 1000 years. All the numbers in the Book of Revelation are literal by the way. I've yet to find one allegorical number in Revelation. So all believers will enter the kingdom for the 1,000 years, but not all believers will inherit the kingdom. To be sure, believers who live an unrighteous lifestyle, who are characterized as unrighteous due to their habitual sin patterns, some of which are listed there in vv 9-10, will not inherit the kingdom. And sure enough the Greek word inherit means "to acquire a possession." So then to inherit the kingdom means to come into possession of the kingdom in such a way that you have ownership in the kingdom, you have position and authority in the kingdom. This is a reward as we saw in Col 3:23-25 where Paul says that the believer who labors as to the Lord will receive the reward of the inheritance but the believer who labors as to men will not receive the reward of inheritance. And this teaching dovetails nicely with Gal 5:19-21 where Paul lists the deeds of the flesh and says that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. That is simply to say that believers can be dominated by the flesh. Romans 8 says that this occurs when

a believer sets their mind on the things of the flesh. And ultimately then such believers will not be rewarded with inheritance in the kingdom. And while this should be no surprise the believers at Corinth were deceived on this point and kept living fleshly lives. Paul's solution is verse 11, to remind them of who they are, what God has done for them, "Such were some of you;" while they were unbelievers some of them were characterized by these sins, not all of them, but some of them were, they stopped those sin patterns and now certain one's were slipping back into those sin patterns and so he reminds them "but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God. That is, simply to say, three things. Positionally you have been washed from the filth, you have been cleansed, and that is terminology used of their regeneration. Second, positionally they have been sanctified, they had been set apart from the world for the purpose of being cleansed from all impurities experientially and third, positionally they have been justified. God had declared them righteous in Christ and so then Paul's point is that victory over a filthy lifestyle is by considering your position in Christ, who you are now as a regenerated, sanctified and justified person and by reckoning ourselves to be new people, this will give us victory over the old sin patterns of the flesh. So always go back to the positional truths that define you as a new person in Christ and yet realize that you still have the old man and you can still live by the flesh, but the solution to victory is considering your old person as dead and yourselves as alive in Jesus Christ, alive to do righteousness by means of the Spirit. Then you will be on the path to inheriting the kingdom.

So then we come to verse 12 and issues concerning the body and the spirit, but primarily the body. What is the value and use of the body in Christianity? First of all, to get the background of the Corinthians thinking, they lived right down the road from Athens and so they had a lot of Greek philosophy. The Greeks held to a dualism between body and spirit; the body was just a house for the spirit and the goal was to get rid of the body and become a spirit being because the body was material which they identified as intrinsically evil and the spirit was immaterial which they identified as intrinsically good. So you just want to get rid of the body. Now, this conception of the body and spirit led to two basic ethics as far as the body was concerned. First you could go legalistic and the legalistic route was to deny the body its pleasures. Go be an ascetic, live in a monastery, go be a hermit and that way you weren't subject to the temptations to fulfill bodily desires. So the legalistic approach

was to separate from the world and abstain from bodily pleasure. On the other side you could go the licentious route and this route says, well, the body doesn't matter anyway; we're going to get rid of it so we might as well fulfill the bodily desires. This led to hedonism; accept bodily desires as normal and healthy desires and go fulfill these desires to the max. So you had these two ethics come out of Greek dualism of body and spirit.

And when the gospel went out to Greek populations, like those at Corinth, the believers carried with them their intellectual heritage of Greek dualism, they thought in terms of Greek categories. And they began to interpret Christianity in terms of Greek categories rather than the other way around, so what developed was a syncretism of Christianity and Greek philosophy.

Now the Corinthians followed the dualistic error of separating too sharply man's body from man's spirit. And they weren't interested in the legalistic route, they weren't ascetics; they were licentious, they went to hedonism; if the body is inherently evil they reasoned, and the spirit is inherently good then we can hedonistically fulfill the passions of the body and it won't effect our spiritual life. If you want to have sex, that's a natural bodily desire and therefore have as much of it as you want because it's unrelated to your spiritual life. One day you'll get rid of your body anyway and just be a spirit being. So then the error here was the error of dualism between body and spirit in order to justify fulfilling bodily passions on the basis of the error that the body would eventually be done away with. Paul states this error by what is almost certainly a Christian Corinthian slogan in verse 12, **All things are lawful for me...** they may have even gotten this from Paul, but what Paul meant was all things are lawful for me "in Christ!" They had taken it that Paul was saying we could engage in any bodily activity and it didn't matter.

But Paul vehemently opposed this view of the body and begins to qualify this four ways. First of all, in verse 12, **All things are lawful for me, but not all things are beneficial.** Second, also in verse 12, **All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.** Third in verse 14, **God will also raise us up through His power,** resurrection of the body. Fourth, in verse 15, our **bodies are members of Christ.** And fifth, verse 20, **we have been bought with a price. Therefore we ought to glorify God in our body.**

All that to say Paul is working off of a very different philosophy of the body and the spirit. He is not working from a Greek dualism where the material, earthly body is an intrinsically evil house for the intrinsically good spirit. Rather his view is the Jewish theology of Genesis which is what I call spiritual materiality, that is, material can be spiritual. Turn to Gen 2. Just because something is material does not make it evil. In fact, when God created the universe the whole universe, material and immaterial was very good. As Barry Horner says, "This whole creation was "very good" in it's substance in conjunction with a hovering and inherent spirituality. Perhaps we could say that God's original creation comprised of "spiritual materiality," and thus was wholly unpolluted, undefiled. There was nothing "carnal" or second-rate about this holy materiality...From God's perspective, His creation was good, spiritually and materially, especially in the sense of being admirable both ethically and aesthetically." This is what we call spiritual materiality.

In particular let's look at the composition of the first spiritual material man. What is man? In Gen 2:7 we find the origin of man. If we could divide man into parts how many parts would man have? Two basic answers have been given down through history. The first is *dichotomy* which means to cut into two, two parts, man has a material side and an immaterial side but he is one person. Dr Ryrie for example would be a dichotomist. He'd say you can't be more precise than that, you can talk about body, spirit and soul and all of that but finally you have two basic components; material and immaterial. The second view is *trichotomy* which means to cut into three parts; and they say man is three parts, body, spirit and soul. And someone like W.G.T Shedd would be representative of a trichotomist. A third view is not as historically involved but has come about because this issue has never been resolved happily in favor of dichotomy or trichotomy. So it's what is called an open door issue meaning many good men keep walking through this door to discuss the issue and the door has never been closed on the issue. So it has remained unsolved so far as satisfying the great theological thinkers. And so this third view is an attempt to reconcile these two views and satisfy everyone. It's a hybrid position and it says both sides have some merit, there is truth to saying man is material and immaterial and there is truth to saying man is body, spirit and soul. Now the hybrid view is based on the formula of Gen 2:7. "Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living

being.” If you’ll notice the first part, God “formed man of dust from the ground.” Is that material or immaterial? We’re talking about chemicals from the earth, the smallest components, which are material components. So there is a material component to man. And this describes what God used to form the body. God formed the body of man out of the material components of soil. Then he says, “and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life;” that’s God breathing into his nostrils the breath of life, in Hebrew the *neshemah*. What’s the *neshemah*? It’s the spirit, God breathed into man the spirit of life. And is the spirit material or immaterial? It’s immaterial. Immaterial going into the material. It’s animating the material, investing it with life. So there’s something to dichotomy. And to them this body invested with a spirit is said to have become “a living being” or *nephesh*, a living soul or simply put, a person. So then a human person or soul is the result of the coalescing of a human body and a human spirit. Or put mathematically, body + spirit = soul. So there’s something to trichotomy too. It’s not one or the other. Man has a body, which is material, he has a spirit which is immaterial and he has a soul. But the soul is a hybrid. It’s not material or immaterial, it’s both. Most people think of the soul like the Greeks, as immaterial; sorry, it’s both material and immaterial because it is the body and the spirit together. Now I’m indebted to Dr Arthur Custance the Canadian anthropologist and physiologist who put it this way, “The soul, then...is a resultant of the presence of a *spirit* which is God-given *within a body*, which is woman-born. Accordingly, there could be no soul to a bodiless creature, and both angels and demons are spirits, not souls.”¹ So then the soul is a result of a body and spirit, not an altogether separate component, it is the result of the fusion of a body and spirit. To illustrate this Dr Custance used the analogy of combining two colors, one representing the spirit and the other representing the body. He said, if we may represent the spirit by the color blue and the body by yellow, then when the blue and yellow are combined the result is what? Green, a third color. And it’s this third color that represents the soul. So then it can be seen that man is a body and spirit together. So what is man? Man is not a material body. And man is not a spirit. Man is a spirit within a body which composes a soul.

So then what is the image of God? If man is made in the image of God what part of man is the image of God? All of Him. The whole person is made in the image of God, not just man’s spirit or man’s body. The Scriptures teach that man is made in the image of God not man’s spirit only and certainly not

man's body only, but the total man; man's spirit within a body is the image of God. Now it bothers people that I say that man's body is part of the image of God because God doesn't have a body. Of course He doesn't have a body, unless of course you are speaking specifically of the incarnation in which the second person of the Trinity took to Himself a human body as well as a human spirit. But then we are speaking of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. However, generally speaking we say that God does not have a body. And that is absolutely true. God is spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and truth. Nevertheless man's total person is created in God's image, both body and spirit. But that does not attribute to God a body because all that is meant is that man is a finite representation of God. Put another way, if God were to incarnate Himself He would appear as a man and not a monkey with all due respect to our evolutionary friends. Only man is made in the image of God and man is distinct from angels in that he has a body and he is distinct from animals in that he was given his spirit directly by God, so that man is neither angel or animal but the very image and likeness of God.

Now the point of saying all these great theological truths is to say that God wants the entire person to worship and glorify Him. All of you, body and spirit; material and immaterial. The Corinthians were not worshipping Him in body because they thought of the body is unimportant, why would God want us to worship Him in body when that is going to be destroyed anyway? Well, you might recall that Jesus Christ saves the entire man, not merely his spirit. He regenerates our spirit and He will resurrect our bodies so that we may be like Him.

How then ought we to glorify God? In our spirit only? Or in both body and spirit? In both body and spirit. Both body and spirit go together to compose our entire person which has been purchased by Christ. So then we must glorify God in both spirit and body, that is to say, with our whole person. Now with that background we will go into these most excellent but logically difficult verses. People tell me they can't understand what I am saying. Well, that's because the Bible is not easy to understand, the basic message is easily understood, but there are depths to the word of God. And to teach the entire counsel of God you have to teach the depths of the word of God. And to do justice to what is written, to communicate it accurately is something I'll be held accountable for, so my task is to get it right not make it simpler which runs the risk of missing the mark altogether.

So then, verse 12, Paul says, **All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.** I would like to change this translation slightly, particularly the word **lawful** because that makes it sound as if something has been written down in a legal handbook; you can do this, you can do that, this is legal. But that is *not* the sense of what Paul is saying. The word translated **lawful** is the word *exestin* which means permitted, it's the idea that God permits you do things as a Christians. This we said was a Christian slogan in Corinth, they took it to justify their fleshly excesses. They said we can do whatever we want, we can sleep with prostitutes, we can fulfill the bodily passions. But Paul qualifies it by saying, **but all things are not beneficial.** So then the first question to ask when it comes to a freedom we may partake of is - is it beneficial? God may permit me to do it but is it beneficial to anyone? God does permit believers to do things that don't benefit anyone. In other words, God permits you to walk by the flesh but that doesn't benefit anyone. God permits you to sin, sin, sin but that's not going to benefit you or anyone else. Sin is never beneficial, it always wrecks things, whether you can see the wreckage or not. So God does permit us to sin but God's permission to sin does not mean we should sin.

Then Paul gives a second qualification in verse 12, **All things are permitted to me, but I will not be mastered by anything.** That is, I may be permitted to do something but will it master me? Will it gain ascendancy over me? Now the practice of sinful things can lead to being dominated by the sinful thing. What happens is you do it one time, your conscience said don't do it but you did it anyway, you don't confess, it becomes easier to do it a second time, and what's happening is your conscience had a standard, may have been a biblical standard or just an ethical standard you picked up from the culture, but some standard, let's say it's biblically informed, so you've got your standards from the Scripture and then you violate your conscience, that's called sin, and then you don't confess your sin and get restored to fellowship so the next time it gets easier. Your conscience still convicts you but it's not as strong, so you sin again, don't get back in fellowship and the third time its even easier and it just gets easier and easier and easier. And what happens is you're searing your conscience every time you sin so that the conviction gets less and less until there's hardly any conviction at all and now you're dominated by this sin, it rules your life, you've been **mastered**. Paul

says, yea, there are a lot of things I'm permitted to do, God will allow me to do this, God will allow me to do that, but I'm careful because it can lead to domination.

For example people that get addicted to substances, like wine. You can drink wine, that's permitted by God, not a problem, but have you considered its ability to master you? Because once you've lost control of the situation now you're enslaved to grapes. I like to say it that way because it makes you feel stupid. To be enslaved to wine is to be enslaved to grapes, grapes have mastered you or grain if you are enslaved to some other alcohol. The theological way of looking at this is that you have put yourself under nature. In other words, there is an order to creation. The proper order is God the Creator, under Him is the creation and within creation you have man and nature, the proper order in creation is man is above nature. But if you get enslaved to something in nature, you are dominated by barley because you can't control your alcohol intake, then you have put yourself under nature, nature is dominating you, which is what happened when Eve ate the fruit; she put herself under a serpent, under nature. Now when you back away from these sin problems and realize what's going on and that you over here are dominated by a plant, how embarrassing is that? You've been mastered by a little green plant. Paul says I will not be mastered by anything. By which obviously, in the context, he means bodily passions, things like illicit sex.

Now he's not saying it's wrong to drink alcohol or it's wrong to have sex. You can drink alcohol but the point is what? Don't let it master you. And you can have sex but only within marriage, don't have sex outside of marriage because then it will become your master. And if these things become your master then you're submitting to them and not to God. And that means you're an idolater, you worship plants or you worship sex. And you're only supposed to worship God. So to be mastered by some component of creation is to commit idolatry.

Now that is the general principle of verse 12 and when we come to verse 13 it seems a disconnect but I hope the earlier material about the Greek philosophy of the body and spirit will help you follow the logic. **Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them.** Now that was their logic, the Corinthian logic, and Paul would agree so far as it goes but what the Corinthians were thinking was

that well, if the stomach is for food and the food is for stomach then why not **extend** the logic into the area of sex. The body is for sex and sex is for the body, God is going to do away with the body so why not just have sex, sex, sex? Seems logical to me.

Now it becomes very apparent at this point that they didn't believe in the doctrine of resurrection, at least some of them; their idea was that the body was just a house for the spirit and when you died you shed yourself of the body and became a spirit being. In verse 14 Paul states the fact of the resurrection. **Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will raise us up through His power.** He simply states the fact but if you'd turn to 1 Cor 15 he's later going to go into a full scale defense of the resurrection. If you look at verse 12, "Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; 14and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain." It's all a hokey belief system, why waste your time, just throw it out. If there's no resurrection verse 19, "we are of all men most to be pitied." What a miserable group Christians are to believe in a dead Christ, if indeed there is no resurrection. Verse 32, "If the dead are not raised, LET US EAT AND DRINK, FOR TOMORROW WE DIE." And that hits the philosophical nail right on the head. Hey, if there is no resurrection why not be a hedonist? Why not eat to your heart's content? Why not drink to your heart's content? Why not have sex to your heart's content? If you see where this thinking goes you see exactly what Paul is getting at back in 1 Cor 6:13. Food for stomach, stomach for food, eat, drink, have sex, sex, sex in every arrangement imaginable. It doesn't matter because it's all just bodily passions and there's no resurrection of the body.

Paul is arguing against bad theology. Paul actually believed that what you believe makes a difference in how you live. So he's got to get straightened out what they believe. He's not anecdotal, he's doctrinal. Verse 14, **God has not only raised the Lord, but will raise us up through His power.** So then the middle of verse 13 makes total sense; **Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body.** So we have our body and the body is designed for a purpose and it's not **immorality**, meaning sexual immorality. it's **for the Lord**, for His purposes, for His glory. This goes for your hands, your feet, your eyes, your ears, all of your physical

body is for His glory. Just think of all the bad consequences that come out rejecting the resurrection. Oh, there's no resurrection, the body is just a temporary house for the spirit and it's going to destruction any way so we might as well let it get all the enjoyment it can here and now, so we'll be hedonists and sleep with everything that moves.

The other side of verse 13 is more difficult, obviously the body is for the Lord, but what does it mean that **the Lord is for the body**? Well, obviously it means that it's important to Him. It's not a piece of trash. If it was a piece of trash He never would have incarnated Himself as a man. The point is that the body is an essential component of man. You can't have a man without a body, all men have a body. So the Lord is for the body, implying resurrection, that's his real point. If the Lord isn't for the body then why did God give the Lord a resurrection body? Why not let His spirit float off into heaven? Because the Lord is for the body, He's for saving men and men and to be a man you have to have a body. Angels don't have bodies. Only men have bodies.

And verse 14 affirms so much, **God has not only raised the Lord, but will raise us up through His power**. The implication being what? Well, if God is going to resurrect our bodies then it does matter what we do in them here and now. In other words, there's a connection between your present body and your future resurrected body, there's not a total disconnect. Now we know a little about the resurrection body because one person rose from the dead already and He walked around and interacted with non-resurrected people and that's the Lord Jesus Christ. And what we know about it is that you had a baby born, that baby was laid in a manger, suckled his mommy's breast, grew up, was tempted, was crucified, laid in a tomb and on the third day the body that was laid in the tomb was gone, transformed, the very body born, grown, tempted, crucified, that body was transformed, the tomb was empty. So then we know there is a connection between our bodies now and our resurrection bodies later. And that has ethical implications for the present. If our bodies are to be resurrected and not merely disposed of then how ought we to live in our bodies now? Paul thinks there should be ethical implications.

Now in verse 15 Paul takes us deeper. What he has you ponder here can keep you busy for the rest of your life. He does it by way of a question: **Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?** Now he's talking about

the individual body, your physical body is a member of Christ, right now, in heaven. It doesn't mean you are members of the body of Christ or anything like that. That's true too, but that's not his point here. His point here is that when you believed in Christ, on that very day you were purchased, all of you was purchased, spirit and body, the whole person, not your spirit, that was regenerated, instantly, and your spirit is now perfect, cleansed, but your body, the very body you have right now was also purchased on the cross and it's not resurrected yet but the very body you have right now will be transformed into your resurrection body, there's a connection between this body and the future resurrection body, so it's a member of Him, you are in Him and therefore you ought to glorify Him in your body now.

So then he further argues, **Shall I take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be!** The point is all parts of your body are members of Christ because they'll be resurrected like unto Him. Therefore to take that which belongs to Him and make them members of a prostitute is unthinkable. **May it never be** says Paul. *Me genoito*, the strongest Greek negative. No, no, no. How could you do such a thing? **do you not know**, verse 16, here's another one of the do you not know's, and my goodness, they should know this from marriage, this has been around for quite awhile. **Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her?** That's an ancient truth, comes right out of Genesis. **For He says, "THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH."** And there's your quotation from Genesis. Look in your margin. Where does it come from? Gen 2:24. Now poor Paul, if he were just up to speed with modern science he'd have known Gen 2 was just poetic myth and that to develop this principle of our bodies being members of Christ out of a poetic myth is ridiculous. But Paul obviously accepted a literal Genesis, accepted a literal Adam and Eve, accepted the first marriage and took the principle of the two becoming one flesh in marriage and applied the principle to our bodies and Christ's body, the two shall become one in that as He is resurrected so we will be resurrected. Therefore we ought to glorify Him in our body.

Verse 17, **But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.** Now he brings in the **spirit**. Remember early on we went through the constitution of man? We said what is man? Man is basically body and spirit which together constitute the soul. And what Paul is arguing for, in the

believer, is a spiritual materiality, the concept that as total people, both body and spirit we are connected intimately with Christ and we ought to live that way. As one author put it, “In simple terms, “In Paul’s own thought, the twin thoughts add up to this: the whole man, body and spirit, belongs to the Lord.”ⁱⁱ

In conclusion, your body is a member of Him because He purchased your body and the same body you have now is the same body that’s going to be transformed into your resurrection body. So honor him in your body, honor him with your eyes, what you watch, honor Him with your ears, what you hear, honor Him with your hands, what you touch, honor Him with your feet, where you go and whatever you do with all your parts, do for His glory and His name sake.

ⁱ http://www.custance.org/Library/Volume5/Part_VI/Chapter2.html

ⁱⁱ Thiselton, A. C. (2000). *The First Epistle to the Corinthians : A commentary on the Greek text* (469). Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans.

[Back To The Top](#)

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