

---

# What is Your Body For?

1 Corinthians 6:9-20-<sup>8</sup>

*Russ Kennedy*

Paul has been dealing with some difficult issues.

Right thinking about church discipline (5:9-12)

Right thinking about personal disputes (6:1-8)

Right thinking about the body (6:9-11)

Right thinking about sex (6:12-20)

The structure of this larger section helps us to see the related topics.

**A Remove the Immoral**

**B Understand the Church**

**C Sin List**

**D Deal with Disputes**

**C Sin List**

**B Understand the Body**

**A Flee Immorality**

The church was struggling with intertwined problems of Immorality and swindling. Throughout the text the Apostle Paul highlights two central errors:

There is wrong thinking about the spiritual Body.

There is wrong thinking about the physical body.

The corrections come through two primary commands:

God's people should deal with sinning in the church.

They must remove the unrepentant

The must Biblically resolve the disputes

---

<sup>8</sup> Unless otherwise designated, Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

God's people should avoid the sin by:

Being willing to discipline.

Being willing to suffer.

Understanding the truth

These words from Paul for us today are very much needed. We sometimes think of our present sex-besotted culture as being unique in history. This is simply not true. Frankly we aren't even close to the depraved cultures in some places in the world and certainly not in history. Corinth in the days of the Bible was so depraved with common practices I would not even name here. Now, that is not to say we don't have trouble. Pornography is rampant particularly through the internet. Conservative estimates now say that 60 to 80% of all internet traffic in the world is porn. Many believers, men and women are caught in its snares. We see it regularly in counseling. The acceptance of the evils of homosexuality, lesbianism and transgenderism is nothing new in the world and is an indication of the degeneracy of our culture according to Romans 1.

The church at Corinth existed in the sewer cesspool of the city. As a result, many new converts were being delivered from the most appalling sins. Many in the church, because of false teaching and foolish ideas were losing the battle for holiness. So now Paul picks up once again the subject of immorality and addresses the issue in the life of the church.

## **Their Former Lives (v. 9-11)**

This paragraph is a transition from the context...

<sup>9</sup> Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, <sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup> And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

### ***The Principle (v. 9)***

Could it be that the church does not know this fundamental principle? Yes, I am sure that there is formal confession that the kingdom of God is for the righteous and not for the unrighteous. But Christians of all ages have often fallen into functional denial of this truth. So we may know this but we often actually believe it. And so we fail to live it out. In the context there is unrighteous leadership, immoral members and scandalous behavior in and outside the church. And all this not only accepted, but in some ways actually celebrated.

### ***The Particulars (v. 9-10)***

Just so that we are clear as to what "unrighteous" means, Paul now gives an illustrative list of sins, evils, unrighteous beliefs and behaviors. The satirical Web site, the

Babylon Bee, had an article entitled, “Progressive Pastor Spends Entire Sermon Apologizing for What Bible Says.” Brothers and sisters, we will not make any apology for what this text says. Notice the way this is written: the unrighteous equals those in this list none of whom will inherit the kingdom.

Are immorality, idolatry, adultery, greed, theft, reviling, swindling all sin? Are they wicked? Are they unrighteous? Yes, then so is the practice of homosexuality. No matter how our culture recasts, remolds, restates, rehabilitates these evils, the church (that is the people) must recognize in both form and function that people who practice these evils will not inherit, will not be a part of God’s kingdom.

But this does not leave us without hope...

### ***The Transformation (v. 11)***

What a great sentence this is, “But some of you used to be like this.” Here is what God has done. He has washed, sanctified and justified sinners. He has transformed people. He has made them different. They are no longer unrighteous. They are no longer sinners. They have been washed meaning their guilt has been cleansed. They have been sanctified meaning they have been set apart from the kind of people they were to become a new kind of people. They have been justified, meaning they have been declared to righteous before God.

So the deadness, darkness and depravity of the unrighteous has been transformed by the grace of God. No longer will they be what they were. No longer will they practice all these sins. And so the question then is, why is the church allowing and not dealing with these sins *in the church*?

### **Their Unbiblical Beliefs (v. 12-14)**

These things are going on because of their unbiblical beliefs.

<sup>12</sup> “All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything. <sup>13</sup> “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food”—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. <sup>14</sup> And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.

From the NLT:

<sup>12</sup> You say, “I am allowed to do anything”—but not everything is good for you. And even though “I am allowed to do anything,” I must not become a slave to anything. <sup>13</sup> You say, “Food was made for the stomach, and the stomach for food.” (This is true, though someday God will do away with both of them.) But you can’t say that our bodies were made for sexual immorality. They were made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about our bodies. <sup>14</sup> And God will raise us from the dead by his power, just as he raised our Lord from the dead.

**Two Assertions (v. 12-13)**

The people excusing their sins were making two assertions.

**All things Lawful (v. 12)**

First, they were saying that all things are lawful. That is, they had freedom to do what they wanted. Their understanding of Christian liberty turned it into ungodly license. They argued that not being under the Law meant that they were not bound to any commands. Maybe they offered it as a question. Maybe they argued it as a justification. But certainly it was used as a cover for unrighteousness.

**Food for Body (v. 13)**

Second, they were saying that food and stomach are meant for each other so food is not evil. This is an argument by analogy. Because of Paul's response to them, he understands them to be saying that in the same way we treat eating so we should treat sex. There is no fundamental difference. Eat, drink, play...

**Two Answers (v. 13-14)**

Paul has a response, an answer, a correction for each of their false beliefs.

**Purpose of the Body (v. 13)**

Food and sex are not the purpose of our physical bodies. Our bodies were not meant for its functions, whether eating or sex. And certainly our bodies were not made for immoral use. Natural, God-given functions are regulated by God. So, our bodies are not ultimate. Our bodies were made for the Lord. Our bodies are the means by which we serve the Lord our Master.

So we are not to be mastered by the God-given, natural desires that God gives us. The commands of God are meant to give righteous use and expression to our physical desires in such a way that we are not enslaved to them. Why is this? Because we are to be mastered by the Lord.

**Resurrection of the Body (v. 14)**

Eventually our present physical bodies will be destroyed by death and the renovation of the new heavens and new earth. But that is not the end of our bodies. We will receive new bodies in the resurrection. The resurrection of our Lord anticipates and empowers the resurrection of our own bodies.

**Their Pointed Correction (v. 15-20)**

But there is a great truth that they do not seem to know. And so Paul pointedly corrects their ignorance and error.

<sup>15</sup> Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! <sup>16</sup> Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh." <sup>17</sup> But he who is joined to the

Lord becomes one spirit with him. <sup>18</sup> Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. <sup>19</sup> Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, <sup>20</sup> for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

### ***United with Christ (v. 15)***

Once again the church at Corinth does not understand the church. Our being members of Christ's Body has important ramifications for act of intimacy itself. We have been united with Christ. Yes, we know that. We are spiritually undated to the Body of Christ through the work and presence of the Spirit. But says this is not merely in the spiritual realm. There is a kind of union with Christ that means we united physically as well. Since we have been united with Christ, then there is a huge implication for sex.

### **Treating Sex Casually (v. 16-17)**

<sup>16</sup> And don't you realize that if a man joins himself to a prostitute, he becomes one body with her? For the Scriptures say, "The two are united into one." <sup>17</sup> But the person who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him. [NLT]

Why does Paul say this? Because sex is a one-flesh union. This is true in marriage as shown in the quote from Genesis 2:24. Jesus and Paul draw several important applications from that signal text in Genesis. The one flesh union is to be only between a man and a woman and that only in marriage. Being joined to a prostitute is a one-flesh union, but not a marriage. Genesis 2:24 is saying that sex in marriage is a part of the one-flesh union of man and wife. But sex does not create a marriage. Having sex outside of marriage does not create a marriage. This is true of any immorality. But it is not casual recreation. It is sin and loaded with implications.

Now why does Paul talk about "being joined to a prostitute?" Why a prostitute? It is likely that Paul is not referring to a street prostitute. He is talking about the temple prostitutes. In the Roman world and in the pantheon of pagan religions, there were some religious temples that encouraged sex with their priestesses. A donation was received by the temple for this "religious rite." This allowed men and women to visit the temple and for a small donation, have sex and it was all accepted culturally. So, as hard as it is for us to accept, this seems to have been practiced and maybe even allowed and approved by the church.

So Paul goes after this casual treatment of intimacy. It is also why he connects it to our union with Christ. To commit any immorality is sin. But to corrupt our spiritual union with Christ by going in to a prostitute, much less a temple prostitute, is shocking. Those who are joined to the Lord by the Holy Spirit should not have sex with anyone except their spouse.

Immorality is also a sin with a significance.

## **Sinning against Themselves (v. 18)**

<sup>18</sup> Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.

So Paul issues a simple command. Run away. Flee. Don't stay in the place of temptation. It is possible this is an illusion to Joseph in the Old Testament. When he was being propositioned by his Egyptian master's wife, he appealed to her marriage and to his relationship with her husband and with God. When she persisted, fled from the room leaving his coat. Flee...

Paul is declaring that sexual sin is different from all other sins. Since we are joined to Christ, and since we are a part of His when we are immoral and sin against Christ, we are sinning against our own [B]ody. It is possible that he is talking about sinning against our own physical body. It would be hard to understand what that sin is. But sexual sin joins us to someone not our spouse and thus we are sinning against Christ, whose body we are.

## ***Indwelt by the Spirit (v. 19-20)***

<sup>19</sup> Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, <sup>20</sup> for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body

The final correction brings two important ideas together. We are indwelt y the Spirit of God. So our bodies are God's temple. Earlier. Paul had taught the corporate indwelling of the Spirit. The Spirit dwells in the church as a living temple. Also, the Spirit lives in human beings, in our bodies. He resides within each one of us. That personal indwelling by God's Spirit is what joins us together so that the corporately the church is the dwelling place of the Spirit.

Now why is this important? In this text, Paul connects the indwelling of the Spirit with God's ownership of our bodies. He has purchased us. HE has regenerated us. He has indwelt us by the Spirit. Our bodies are not our own. We have them as a stewardship. We are not free to do anything we want. Our bodies are God's. Careful what you do with what is not yours, but God's

So, glorify God in your body. Godet said of this text, "Display positively in the use of our body the glory and especially the holiness of the heavenly Master who has taken possession of our person." [Godet, p. 314]

One author summarized Paul's five truths about the body as follows: [Prior, p.99]

The purpose of the body in the Lord (v.13).

The resurrection of the body in the Lord (v. 14).

The interaction of the body with the Lord (v. 15-17).

The habitation of the body by the Lord (v. 19).

The redemption of the body by the Lord (v. 19-20).

The point: glorify God in your body...

---

## **Reflect and Respond**

Do you understand the church? Having a Biblical and complete view of the church is intensely practical. You will affirm the necessity of church discipline. You will handle your interpersonal disputes Biblically. And you will be very careful to maintain godly purity.

May the Lord help all of us to flee from immorality. Brothers and sisters, flee immorality.

In all that you do in your body, whether in food or sex:

Know that you are a part of Christ's body and therefore a part of one another.

Remember you are indwelt by the Spirit.

Affirm that you have been bought by the Lord.

Seek to glorify God in your body.

