

The Faithful Body 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Prior to this passage, Paul has repeatedly attempted to move the Corinthians away from an attitude of “It’s all about me” to a focus on Jesus. He opens the letter with twenty references to God or Christ in the first ten verses of the book and he frequently reminds them that Jesus is source of their lives (1:28-31; 3:6-7, 11, 16, 21-23; 4:7) in a world of competing passions.

Another difficulty in the church was the Corinthian’s relationship to old worship styles that included physical intimacy outside of marriage with temple prostitutes.

These new Christians thought, *“We have physical appetites and God has given us food. We have physical appetites and God has given us intimacy.”* Paul retorts, *“Yes, that’s true but you can abuse food and you can also abuse intimacy.”*

“But what,” we might ask Paul, *“is the big deal about what we do with our bodies?”*

That’s a good question, especially because Jesus told the woman at the well, *“God is spirit...”* (John 4:24).

London Baptist Confession, Chapter 2 – *“Of God and of the Holy Trinity – “The Lord our God is... a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts...”*

This is why Paul says that God the Father is invisible (Col 1:15; 1 Tim 1:17).

Before God created the world, there was nothing physical. Only God existed and that, without physical being. This even more confused those who waited for a Messiah -

1 Peter 1:10 - Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, ¹¹ inquiring what person or time^[a] the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

And God did it by making his son a physical being

Galatians 4:4 - But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman

Hebrews 1:5 -when Christ came into the world, he said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me...”

Philippians 2:6 - he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

I say all of this to say that divine creation gives worth and meaning to physical existence and Jesus's incarnation, even more so.

What we do with the physical world matters because, in the end, God is going to rejuvenate this world, remove the curse and establish his physical kingdom in this physical world.

Remember that the Temple to Aphrodite dominated the skyline at Corinth.

Picture –

Worship for us involves our voices and perhaps the lifting of our hands. Dancing is strictly forbidden because we're Baptist. But worship in Corinth involved prostitution. And the Bible elevates the place of both women and men.

Romans 12:1 - I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship

First: Your Body is a Temple. 19 - *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...*

Paul has already broached this subject -

1 Corinthians 3:16 - *Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?*

What is a temple? From Eden to Herod's Temple, (from the OT to the NT), a temple is where God meets people.

The moment you trusted Christ, the Holy Spirit took up residence in you, making your body God's temple

Romans 12:9 - *... the Spirit of God dwells in you.*

It's for this reason that we should use our bodies to meet with God and not use them for things that don't honor the Lord

15-17 - 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! ¹⁶ 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." ¹⁷ But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.

A person pursuing a casual physical encounter may not want or intend to become one flesh with their partner, but modern science tells us that they do in a physical sense.

Part of their self s given to that person, and it means there is less to give to the Lord and to the partner God intends for them. From the biblical perspective, there is no such thing as “casual physical intimacy.

Second: Your Body is a Trust. 20a - *for you were bought with a price.*

Calling up the familiar image of a slave market, where human beings are bought for a certain sum of money, Paul says that each of us has been bought and entrusted with the gospel of our bodies.

Christ does not set us free so that we can do whatever we want to do; Christ sets us free so that we can do whatever God wants us to do.

Since we belong to Jesus – body, soul, and spirit – we have no right to give any part of our self away to an “unauthorized” person.

Ill – One of the T4G speakers talked about people who babysat his children. When he and his wife returned home, the babysitter always went down a list of how they had cared for the children.

Ill – John Piper – The cross purchased both our salvation and sanctification –

1 Peter 1:18 - knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ,

The same blood that saves you, sanctifies you.

14-15 - *And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.*

Greek philosophy thought that the soul/mind was much more important than the body. In fact, they taught that death liberates the human soul from the prison house of the body. But the Gospel of Jesus Christ didn't talk that way. At the heart of that Gospel was the death and physical resurrection of Jesus.

Here in verse 14, he connects Christ's resurrection to ours. *“God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.”* That's how important your body is to God. Jesus died and rose not just for your soul, but also for your body.

In fact, *“your bodies are members of Christ himself.”* Here, Paul says that union with Christ is not just a spiritual thing. Because we are saved body and soul, our bodies are in Christ, too.

So.....18a- *Flee from sexual immorality.* – Paul doesn't say, “Flee sex,” but “sexual immorality.

Physical intimacy is a precious gift that powerfully bonds a husband and wife

Hebrews 13:4 - *Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.*

18b - Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.

Since we belong to Jesus – body, soul, and spirit – we have no right to give any part of our self away to an “unauthorized” person.

Third: Your body is a testimony. 20b

So glorify God in your body.

As a result, we can only do with our bodies those things that honor Christ.

One aspect of our sinfulness is focusing on our freedom to the neglect of our responsibilities to God.

12-13 - All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful.

Eating is permitted but that doesn’t mean that abusing food is helpful. Anything can be freely chosen but it can also dominate my life.

“All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything. ¹³ “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food”—and God will destroy both one and the other.

This is hard when there are multiple food channels!

The body requires food but doesn’t/shouldn’t live for food. We should not live under the power of our stomachs.

Sure, eating and drinking are natural and necessary for physical life, but neither food nor your body is ultimate. “God will destroy them both.”

“Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food” - The Corinthian Christians probably used this motto to justify giving their bodies whatever their bodies wanted. “My body wants food, so I eat. My body wants sex, so I hire a prostitute. What’s the problem?”

Eating is permitted

Colossians 2:16-17 - *Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. ¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.*

but that doesn't give us the liberty to abuse food or our bodies in eating.

In the same way, God intends for the body to enjoy intimacy, but the body is not meant for sexual immorality.

Conclusion

In this passage, Paul demonstrates the way to control the abuse of grace is not to crack the whip of the law. Instead, Paul reminds them of their relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Physical intimacy was always meant to be enjoyed through the lifelong commitment of marriage. The Bible says, *"a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh"* (Gen. 2:24).

Christ is married to one church. He has one lover. Christ is devoted to you, in every way. He died for you and was raised for you physically. He wants you to be equally devoted to him physically.

Who is Jesus to me, and will I be to Jesus, what Jesus is to me?

Community Groups:

- 1 – Read the passage.
- 2 – List some "all about me" ways the world lives?
- 3 – What passages in the Bible call us to a different, other-centered lifestyle?
- 4 – What does creation tell us about physicality?
- 5 – What does the incarnation say about our bodies?
- 6 - What does Paul mean when he says our bodies are temples?
- 7 – How might we use our bodies as places where people meet God?
- 8 – What price did Jesus pay for our souls and bodies?
- 9 – Read 1 Peter 1:18. Why can we not claim Jesus as Savior without a desire for sanctification?
- 10 – Why is God going to raise us physically?
- 11 – How does this elevate the physicality of our lives now?
- 12 – How do our bodies 'testify' about Jesus?
- 13 – What does the phrase "all things are lawful but not all things are helpful" mean?
- 14 – What avenue does God give us to express our sexuality?
- 15 – How does obedience in this issue keep us safe?
- 16 – How does my physical fidelity to a person reflect Jesus's fidelity to me?