

Who Are We? pt.2

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[0:00] Hello everyone. We are continuing in our series 2 1 Corinthians.

! We're in the latter part of chapter 6. Again, it's on page 1134 of your Pew Bible. As always, I encourage you to open up and follow along. And our topic for these last two Sundays, we've been asking the question, Who are we?

You know, Carl Truman, some of you might be aware of his book, The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self. Carl Truman described human beings, currently, humans in the world, in our day, as plastic people, living in a liquid world.

And by that he meant that we, that where our grandparents and great-grandparents lived in the world where they were born into and died within a 50-mile radius.

They were baptized, married, and buried in the same church. But today, we live in a world where we can determine our profession. You didn't have to be born a farmer, as it was probably 100, 150 years ago.

[1:22] Or a cobbler, whatever it is, that your family profession was. We can determine our profession. We live wherever we want. With the advent of cars, we can go from one church to the other, as we please.

So when we ask the question, who are we, as we've been asking since the beginning of chapter 6, we might feel like the answer to that question lies within.

The plasticity of the modern man makes him say things like this, I've fallen out of love with you, and I've fallen in love with this other woman.

Or even, I am a man trapped in a girl's body, or vice versa. That's the age and the world we live in. Our culture invites us to navel gaze, to look inward to our feelings, our changing tastes and appetites to answer the question, who are we?

[2:36] We are encouraged even to reinvent ourselves depending on the craving or the appetite that you have of the moment. So who are we?

You know, the Christian person does not answer that question on the basis of who he or she once was. whatever that may have been.

Be it sexually immoral, idolater, adulterer, homosexual, thief, greedy, drunkard, reviler, or swindler, or any other category of sin, apart from the ones that we've looked at earlier in chapter 6.

We do not answer that question on the basis of who we once were. As Christians, we answer on the basis of what we've been made into through our union with Christ.

And that's how the Bible invites us to answer the question, who are we? We saw that last week in chapter 6, verse 11. Paul tells us, he reminds us, you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

[3:52] These verses answer this question for us in a way that is completely opposite of how our culture will have us answer it. As citizens of God's kingdom, this question is the asked and answered.

We must ask the question, we must answer it. But we must do so in the way God's Word shows us, not in the way the popular culture invites us to.

And so, the other thing we must then answer or really dive into is as we answer the question, who are we? We must also ask the question, who are we listening to as Christians?

Because to answer that question, who are we listening to will determine how we answer the question. Are we listening to the culture? To the media? Are we listening to God in His Word?

And you know, especially in the matter, on the matter of sexuality, our world has fallen so far off God's created order. And it's still falling. And since everything in our world is so saturated with this wrong thinking and living regarding this issue, it is important that we stand our ground and stake our

thinking and our living on God's Word.

[5:21] God, we must be intentional in doing so. Because, brothers and sisters in Christ, on this matter, there is no neutral ground.

there is no neutral ground. If we are not old and fast to God's standard regarding sexuality and holiness, we will be adopting the world's viewpoint.

And as we old to God's standard, we will find that indeed the world is not our home anymore. we've become aliens.

In fact, we are aliens and pilgrims waiting for our true heavenly abode. So, we've said before that the Corinthian culture is very much like ours in its godlessness, in its perverseness, in its idolatry, in its rank sexual immorality.

They're very much like 21st century America. And Paul writes to Christians living in this culture to remember that they are a new humanity in Christ and not to resort back to the old man.

[6:45] And so, in verse 12 to 14, these Christians in Corinth will see that they've been using their freedom as a cover. They've been using their freedom in Christ as a cover and as a license for continuing in sin.

And they have a catchphrase they've adopted. The catchphrase is this, all things are lawful for me. All things are lawful for me.

That was a quotation. Paul is quoting them there in verse 12. You know, this Corinthian theology that they've adopted, it's not a Christian theology by the way, it's a Corinthian theology.

This Corinthian theology claims they've been granted liberty from the Lord's constraints and then therefore they are free to do anything. By the way, this is why Paul starts his letter to them in chapter 1 to 4 by drawing them back to right thinking about God.

And as we see from chapter 5 on, we see how damaging wrong thinking or wrong doctrine can be. Because wrong thinking, wrong doctrine inevitably leads to wrong ethics and practice.

[8:05] Unless there is repentance, this usually results in two ways. It results in Phariseeism, as we read in our gospel reading this morning.

the Pharisees are teachers of the Lord. Jesus says to the people, do as they teach but not as they do. So, this is what happens when we set up, when we fall into wrong thinking.

Phariseeism or legalism results and what happens then is that we seek to bind people's hearts and conscience with laws that are not from God. Or, it results in the Corinthian side of the same coin, which we were seeing in our passage in the phrase, all things are lawful for me.

It results in antinomianism. The word antinomianism just means a feeling of freedom from the obligation of the law. They don't feel like they are obligated to obey God's law anymore.

Essentially, there is no law. We can do as we please. We become a law unto ourselves. Live as we want. Do whatever pleases us. Fulfill all our appetites.

[9:28] As if God is not Lord and sovereign and judge of all the earth. So, their slogan is, all things are lawful for me. That is, they are saying that they are no longer bound by any law.

But Apostle Paul corrects them by saying to them, indeed, it is true that you are no longer under the law since you are free in Christ.

It is a true freedom. You are no longer bound by the law. You are free in Christ. But he is saying to them, this freedom that you have in Christ is in fact freedom from sin.

Freedom from the bondage of sin. not freedom to do any as you please. It is freedom to be able to keep God's commandment.

That is actually what Christian freedom is. Paul is correcting them by saying to them, God's moral standards are not abolished for the Christian. Rather, he or she is enabled by the Holy Spirit to do what God requires.

[10:37] That's where the freedom lies. The freedom in the power of the Holy Spirit to do as God requires. So if everyone claims, look at it, think about it, if everyone claims a person of freedom, if everyone says all things are lawful for me, I am autonomous, I'm an autonomous being, I'm free from accountability to God and to one another in the church, what would happen in such a setting?

We will soon start to use our freedom as a stick to beat each other over the head. Because your freedom is going to impinge on my freedom and my freedom is going to impinge on yours.

That's what happens. That's what happened in the Corinthian church in fact. So Paul says to them, yes, all things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful. And I will not be dominated by anything.

In other words, while I may have liberty to do anything in Christ, I would not let anything take liberty over me.

I will not return to a yoke of slavery and sin from which I have been set free from. I will be mindful that I now have the mind of Christ which thinks of others more highly than myself.

[12:06] That's the freedom we have in Christ. Freedom to have the mind of Christ. The mind that loves others thinks of them more highly than myself, as Jesus himself demonstrated in his earthly life, so that we would not stand upon our freedom, but we would serve one another in love, in Christ.

That's the point. This is the freedom that we've been given, not the Corinthian theology. So Paul continues, in verse 13, he says, food is meant for the stomach and 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. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.

So the Corinthian church, they've adopted this Greek dualistic view of the world. They've separated the physical world from the spiritual. they argue that since food is meant for the body and for the stomach, the food is meant for the body and the stomach is for food, they reckon!

that God would destroy both, eventually, both food and stomach one day, being physical things, God would destroy them. So they said to themselves, it doesn't matter what we eat, what we drink, we can eat whatever we want, we can eat from wherever we want, but they don't just leave it at food and the stomach, they don't just leave it there, they also say that if that's true of food, it must also be true of the body.

[13:49] So they say to themselves, well the body is for sex and sex is for the body because God would destroy them both at the end. that's the jump, the leap they've made.

But Paul wants them to see this, your body belongs to God. So Paul again corrects them, he says to them, the body is actually not unimportant to God, quite the opposite.

Your body is very important to God. Your body such as it is in this world, even now is meant for the Lord and the Lord for the body.

Your body is not for sexual immorality. And just like Jesus' earthly body, Paul continues, which was destined for resurrection and not for destruction, your body also is destined for resurrection on the Lord's day, at the last day.

Paul will now go on, by the way, to build the rest of the chapter here on this principle, that our body belongs to the Lord. He's saying to them, the salvation that God has wrought and will complete, is not just a spiritual salvation.

[15:12] You're not just going to be some ethereal, glowing, lifeless, matterless being. We are saved, body and soul.

God will raised Christ. That we will be raised bodily. In fact, we will see that this is where Paul lands in this letter in chapter 15.

The bodily resurrection of the believer. And so Paul continues in verse 15, he says, 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, he says. Now, this is the fourth of six do you not know in this chapter, whereby Paul questions the Corinthians understanding of basic foundational Christian truth.

He's saying to them, do you not know your bodies are members? Members, that is, members means your bodies are limbs and organs of the body of Christ.

[16:27] That's what he means by members. Your body are limbs and organs of the body of Christ. So, what a grievous violence, what a grievous sacrilege to take that which has been welded to Christ in mystical union and to join it to a prostitute.

What a sacrilege. That's why Paul says, God forbid, never. So, in the, by the way, in Corinth, the pagan temples were the center of prostitution.

Where the temple priestesses in these pagan temples will prostitute themselves, prostitution. And what's going on in the Corinthian church is that some of them are participating in this immorality. Their culture embraces it. Their culture allows it. Their culture around them celebrates it. And some Christians are participating in this immorality.

So, you see, Corinth is not unlike the 21st century America in a lot of ways. If we think about it, we have our own modern pagan temples where sexual immorality is celebrated and expected.

[17:49] We have the high temple of Hollywood where all of it is being propagated to the whole world, the media, of sexual promiscuity and licentiousness, all that is secular to God's created order is being celebrated and we're invited to embrace it.

It's important that we remember that *porneia*, the word sexual immorality, *porneia*, is wide ranging. Sexual immorality, as Paul defines it, is any form of sexual activity, verbal, virtual, visual, or actual, outside of a lifelong exclusive marriage relationship between a man and a woman. anything outside of that is sexual immorality. And as we think of that, let us also remember what our Lord says in Matthew 5, 28. Whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.

So I want us to consider all this before thinking these verses has nothing to do with us. since we've not, as far as I know, I'm pretty sure none of us has visited temple prostitutes.

[19:15] So you might say, well, this doesn't have anything to do with me. But I think if we're honest with ourselves, if we're honest with ourselves, we will agree that Paul's admonition here has a lot to do with us today.

So Paul goes on to explain. He's explaining to them why it is such a sacrilege for Christians to engage in sexual immorality. Verse 16, do you not know, again, 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. But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.

So essentially Paul is saying, how dare you join your body which is destined for resurrection? How dare you join your body to that of a prostitute which is destined for destruction?

Such bodily union is meant and ordained by God only to be done in the context of marriage.

[20:31] Of a marriage relationship between a man and woman. And so more so you are joined to Christ. Dear Christian, you are joined to Christ.

You are welded and wedded to him in spiritual union through the work of the Holy Spirit. How dare you then join that which has been welded and wedded to Christ to a prostitute.

It might be important to mention here that again any form of sexual immorality applies here. and what does Paul say to the Christian who is tempted to do this, who lives in a world where such things are being celebrated and embraced.

What does he say? Verse 18 he says flee from sexual immorality. Now this is a command.

It's an imperative. it's not a suggestion. Flee because every other sin a person commits it's outside the body.

[21:49] But the sexually immoral person sins against his own body Paul says. Paul is insane. By the way flee. Why does he say flee?

Because he knows it's destruction. It's death. It's an imagery as I was thinking I was listening to somebody else. preaching this he says he was describing once he was running from a bull. And he understood what the word flee meant in that moment. As he was fleeing he wasn't checking to see how far am I from this bull. No.

Full on. One directional. Focused. All his being was engaged in fleeing from that bull.

Think about what the Bible describes the devil as. A devouring lion. How many of you encountered with a lion and able to run?

[22:52] Says well let me see how far I can get close first before I how many of you will do that? Well think of this. this is the command to flee.

Flee from sexual immorality. Paul is not saying that other sins do not affect the body. Don't hear him say that.

He's not saying only sexual immorality is the only sin that affects us. All sins do affect us one way or the other. But he is saying here that sexual sins in particular is a joining of your body in more than a physical way with another person's body.

Sexual intimacy is a joining of body mind and soul which runs counter to what our culture or the Corinthian culture says. We have a name for it today in our day.

It's called the hookup culture. And what they mean by that is that sexual activity is just bodily functions. It's just a bodily act. It has no ramifications.

[24:01] We can have sex without intimacy. There's no such thing. And there is Paul saying there is no such thing as an insignificant sexual practice.

It requires and involves intimacy of body, mind, and soul. So verse 19 and 20 tells us why that is so. Because Paul goes on in verse 19 says, 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, for you were bought with a prize. So glorify God in your body. Here's the bottom line, brothers and sisters.

Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. who proceeds from God and dwells within you. Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.

Now, the mark of a temple is that within that temple resides the image, whether it's statue, picture, symbol, or character, within the temple resides the image of the deity being worshipped.

[25 : 23] for example, the temple of Aphrodite in Agro-Corinth would have had the statue of the goddess Aphrodite in it. The statue of Zeus or Athena will have, the temple of Zeus or Athena will have the statue of those corresponding god and goddess in their temple, residing in the temple.

God is true for the Christian as well. So that which is true, that which is true of a stone, a silent stone, a speechless idol, is even truer of the living God.

And here's the great mystery and the great marvel and wonder. The living God, who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.

Rather, he dwells in temples that have been washed, sanctified, and justified through the redeeming blood, redeeming blood of his Son. So, dear Christian, counter to the lies of the world that tells you that you are a plastic person in the liquid world, that you can determine, make or remake yourself as you wish, based on your appetite, your sinful proclivities.

Counter to that, the Bible says, different. The Bible says that you've been made in the image of a God who created the world and everything in it. You've been made in his image.

[27 : 11] You bear his character. although you have fallen far short of that image due to your sin and the sin into which you were born, you were, you were by nature children of wrath.

Your life was marked by these sins that Paul had listed in verses 9 and 10. That's who you were, for you were bought with a prize, Paul reminds us.

You were bought with a prize, a costly, precious prize, the shed blood of the only begotten Son of God.

You who were in bondage to sin, bondage to the world and the devil, while you were in that bondage, while you were still a sinner, God sent his Son into the world to die for your sins.

He redeemed you with his blood. You are not your own. Your body is not your own. It is the dwelling place of God the Holy Spirit.

[28 : 34] Your body is not your own. It is the dwelling place of God the Holy Spirit through the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. And so essentially what Paul is saying to us as believers in Jesus, Christians, adopted sons and daughters of the living God, is this.

Your body counts for something. By the way, this is the theology of the body that we as Christians ought to owe to. You know, the world tells us all sorts of lies.

It tells us the body is insignificant. It doesn't matter what we do. The Corinthian Greek sort of ethos is still alive today. It doesn't matter what you do in the body.

It's just the body. You can indulge in every appetite. Whatever your eye sees, you can grab. The world tells us that.

But then again, the world tells us, well, you see the implications of that. The way the world, the culture, things of the human body. The way the human body is exploited.

[29 : 41] We see it evidently in the propensity of pornography. The exploitation that goes in that. How it's related to sex trafficking and all of those evil in the world.

We see it in the way women are devalued in our culture. here, Paul says to us, your body counts for something.

Your body counts for something. It has been redeemed by God and your body will be raised in glory at the resurrection. Your body counts.

So, therefore, glorify God in your body. Now, this command, and again, it is a command, just as flee from sexual immorality is a command, here is another imperative.

Glorify God in your body. This command to glorify God is to be first, is first to be aware. It's an invitation of awareness as Christians, to be aware that your body is the Lord's.

[30 : 57] It's no longer your own. your body is sanctified unto the Lord. It is not made of flesh and blood, and therefore, it must not be used for sexual immorality or any kind, other kinds of

immorality.

And if that is true of your own body, it is true of the body of your brother and sister, as well in Christ, in the family of God. So, we treat each other as sacred beings, because that's who we are.

The Holy Spirit resides in us. This is the Christian ethos of loving and thinking more highly of others than yourself. Notice the order that's given here.

Because the world tells you to glorify your body. The world does preach that gospel. Glorify your body, the world tells you. Listen to it. Let it direct and lead you, the world tells you.

the world also says the body is a temple. Do you know that people say that in the world? The body is a temple. But the only difference is that the God the world says you should worship is not the living God.

[32 : 19] In the world's message, in the world's gospel, which is an anti- gospel, really, it says you should worship yourself. glorify your body.

However, the Bible does not tell you to glorify your body. No, the Bible tells you rather to glorify God in your body. Note the difference.

But we must be honest with ourselves. What happens when you fail? what happens as we all do, all of us, at one time or the other?

What happens when you fall into a sexual sin, whether it's a thought, a word, or an act? What happens? The devil will come.

The devil comes in those moments and whispers the lie of the age to you. The devil whispers the lie and says it's your body, you can do whatever you please with it. But you must remember beloved in Christ, you must remember whose body it is.

[33 : 29] Your body belongs to God. You must not buy into the lie of the enemy. You must repent at those moments, repent and turn to Christ, asking the Holy Spirit to sustain and help you.

That is the privilege of being in Christ. That is the freedom that we have in Christ. It's actually the freedom to turn away from sin. And so in those moments do not despair, do not buy into the lie of the age, do not let the enemies whisper evil and lies and death into your ears.

Believe the word of God and then turn to Christ in repentance. Sometimes the devil comes in those moments of weakness and when we stumble.

And it whispers guilt. Guilt comes. But even in those moments you must remember God's word. In those moments you must be listening to God rather than the devil or the world.

Remember that the sovereign Lord bought your body at the price of his life. He did so knowing full well what you were.

[34 : 52] Knowing what sins you had committed in the past. And knowing what sins still causes you to stumble. He is fully aware of it and yet he redeemed you.

Remember that. Remind yourself of that truth when the devil comes. Trust in the saving work of Christ.

Cling to Jesus Christ and then glorify God knowing that he will one day change this corrupt body into a glorious incorruptible body at the resurrection.

Therein brothers and sisters lies our hope therein lies our joy. Amen.