

'Honour God with Your Bodies'

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[0:00] And please turn your Bibles back to 1 Corinthians 6, as we again talk about another case of sexual immorality.

! It seems that sexual immorality was one of those things that the Corinthian church was most struggling with.

And it's not different today, is it? I remember when I was a uni student, I was a first year, and we were doing a group work.

There were three of us in the group. I was surprised to find how a guy in my group was talking about wanting to woo a Korean girl, because, in his words, he has never tried sex with a Korean girl before.

I was shocked. And I was also surprised to find that a woman in my group had been having one-night stands, and she was sharing it with the group. I was so confused, I said, what's a one-night stand?

[1:07] And they both looked at me like I was the weirdest guy on the planet for not knowing what it is. Apparently, it means having sex with someone casually, only once or one night.

I realized then how different the Christian lifestyle was compared to the world. Casual sex without any commitment is so widely accepted in this world.

And sometimes that worldly culture can penetrate into the church. And it wasn't different back then when Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthians.

Ancient lawyer and philosopher Cicero said this. If there is anyone who thinks that youth should be forbidden from affairs, even with courtesans, he is doubtless eminently self-disciplined, I cannot deny it.

But his view is contrary not only to the license of this age, but also to the custom and concessions of our ancestors. For when was this not a common practice?

[2:12] When was it blamed? When was it forbidden? Cicero was saying casual sex outside of marriage, even with prostitutes, had been widely accepted by the culture and even by their ancestors.

So they must not forbid anyone from doing it. And just like today, that Roman culture of sex sometimes penetrated the church as well, as we see in this passage.

But as we will also see in this passage, the Bible gives us a very different view of sex. And more importantly, a very different view of our bodies.

Let's read. Verse 12. I have the right to do anything, you say, but not everything is beneficial. I have the right to do anything, but I will not be mastered by anything.

Here Paul answers a statement or a slogan that the Corinthians used. They said, I have the right to do anything. And as the rest of the passage shows, they're applying this freedom to sexual immorality.

[3:30] Christians are free, right? We have been freed by Christ. We can just do whatever we want with our bodies, right? Well, not really. Paul first responds, not everything is beneficial.

Or not everything is helpful, constructive, edifying. Christ has freed us. Christ has freed us. That's true. But we should not focus on our own self-centered rights and entitlement.

If we have been redeemed by Christ on the cross, then we must do what Christ did, selfless sacrifice. And often that means self-control. The focus is not my entitlement.

The focus is whether the thing is beneficial both for myself and others. And second, Paul also responds, I will not be mastered by anything.

You see, the Corinthians think they're so free, no one is their master. They have the right to do anything. But actually, by engaging in sexual immorality over and over again, they show that they're

not free.

[4:47] They're enslaved. They're mastered by their flesh, by their sin, by sex. As we have said two weeks ago, holiness is true gospel freedom.

True gospel freedom looks like holiness. Because when Christ frees us on the cross, he frees us from the slavery of our sin and death.

Slavery is when we have to engage in sinful acts. Slavery is when we have sinful thoughts and we can't fight it.

Or sinful desires and we have to entertain them. We have no self-control. That's slavery. Christ freed us from that, which means that we are enabled to live a holy life.

Not to be mastered by our own sinful desires. That's why Paul says, I will not be mastered by anything. I'm free.

[5:53] That's right. But these, friends, enslave. Sexual immorality enslaves. That's what sexual immorality often is, right? Slavery. We engage in one sexual immoral act or we entertain one sexually immoral thought and then we just get hooked.

We have to return to it over and over again. We are mastered by it. Now, these two principles already give us a good foundation for thinking about our freedom in Christ.

That we can apply to all activities. Often as Christians, we ask, are Christians allowed to do this or that? Are Christians free to do this or that?

These two principles can be applied. Is it beneficial for ourselves and for others? Are Christians free to smoke? Well, yes, we're free, but it's not really beneficial for ourselves, is it?

Are Christians free to drink alcohol? Well, yes, we're free. But if we're drinking it with others who struggle with alcoholism, then that's not really beneficial for others, is it?

[7:09] And also, does the thing master us? When we engage in it, does it reflect our freedom to pursue holiness? Or does it show that we're still mastered by sin?

When we engage in it, will it master us and make us addicted to it? Like gambling, for example. These two principles are helpful generally.

But in this passage, Paul applies them specifically in the case of sexual immorality to show that, yeah, we're free.

But then sexual immorality is not beneficial and it's slavery. Now, Paul also responds to another thing that the Corinthians say, verse 13 to 14.

You say, food for the stomach and the stomach for food and God will destroy them both. The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord and the Lord for the body.

[8:12] By his power, God raised the Lord from the dead and he will raise us also. Basically, the Corinthians were saying, sex and food are the same, right?

Sex is just a physical and temporary thing, like food. If we're hungry, we eat. If we feel sexual urges, we have sex. Food is limited to this world.

It doesn't have any eternal significance. And so, sex is limited to this world. It doesn't have any eternal significance. But Paul responds, no.

Sex is not like food. And having sex is not like eating. In a sense that food is destined to just be consumed and destroyed.

But our bodies are not destined to be consumed and destroyed. What we do with our bodies matter because the body belongs to the Lord. And the body won't be destroyed like food.

[9:16] It will be resurrected and renewed. It will be made eternal. What we do with our bodies now matters because God has an eternal purpose for our bodies beyond this physical life.

What is that eternal purpose? Verse 13. For the Lord as He is also for us. What does that mean?

What does that mean that our bodies are meant to be for the Lord? Well, it's a marriage language.

We are for Him and He is for us.

Paul explains that in the next verses. In verse 15 to 17. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ Himself?

Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with the prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with the prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said the two will become one flesh.

[10:23] But whoever is united with the Lord is one with Him in spirit. It's a marriage language. Our bodies are for the Lord and the Lord is for us because we are united to each other.

It's a marriage language. And it's not a coincidence that in the next chapter, the very next chapter for next week, Paul will talk about marriage and sex. Notice how Paul always asks, Do you not know?

Don't you know? Throughout the whole letter we get a sense that the Corinthians think they're so wise and knowledgeable. They're puffed up.

But Paul keeps saying, Do you not know? I thought you were smart. Don't you know this basic doctrine? They think they know, but there is something fundamental that they have forgotten.

Their union with Christ. They are for the Lord and the Lord is for them because they are united to the Lord. As husband and wife are united to each other, Christians too have been united with Christ in His death and resurrection.

[11 : 38] And so, Paul finds it inconceivable that Christians can be united to their Lord in a holy union while also being united to prostitutes in an unholy, sexually immoral union.

It doesn't make sense. The two don't go together. Now, hopefully we are not like the Corinthians who visited prostitutes.

But even so, just as the Corinthians had forgotten about their status in Christ, we too have often forgotten, haven't we? I have often forgotten.

Do we often see Christ as our beloved one? Do we love Him? Do we long to see Him return? If so, surely we must keep our bodies pure for Him.

But that's often not what we do, is it? That's often not what I do. Instead, I see my body as belonging to myself only often. My body, my choice.

[12 : 51] I just do whatever I want with it. I think about indulging my own desires, doing what I see fit. Often we don't care about what our beloved Christ thinks.

Even if we don't have sex with prostitutes, generally, it's still true that we often forget about our identity as members of Christ.

But here Paul is talking about something more specific. Sex with a prostitute. Or we can also apply it to any sex outside of marriage.

Because marriage is the only holy union that God has instituted to reflect the holy union that Christ has with His people. And so any casual sex outside of marriage enjoins us in an unholy sexual relationship with someone else while also being enjoined to Christ.

That's just wrong. It goes against our status as members of Christ. Now, how different would we live in this world if we constantly saw our bodies as members of Christ, in union with Him?

[14 : 16] My body is not a separate thing, standing by itself. It's united to Christ. It's a member of the body of Christ. We can respect our bodies.

We can love our bodies. We can keep our bodies pure. We can keep our bodies holy. Not because we worship our bodies. But because we know that they belong to Christ as His members.

And we love Him. And I think seeing our bodies as members of Christ also gives hope to those who are sexually broken.

Or on the flip side, those who have been victims of other people's sexual brokenness. Our bodies are members of Christ.

All that shame that we might feel is attached to our bodies because of past sexual brokenness. All that shame that we'd like to get rid of, but we feel that we can't.

[15 : 16] All that shame is united to the body of Christ. And nailed there on the cross. And it's left there as Christ rose back to newness of life.

All that shame is no more. The world can have a very low view of the body. People can use their bodies to satisfy their fleshly desires or someone else's fleshly desires.

They can objectify other people's bodies and their own bodies. They want to manipulate their bodies to suit their own desires or to sexually allure others.

But the Bible gives us much higher view of the body. Your body is a member of Christ. It will live on when Christ resurrects it.

Completely new. Free of all shame. Because Christ has died for your body as well as your soul. Because your body as well as your soul belongs to Him.

[16 : 30] Now the practical application of this is simple. For Paul at least. In verse 18. Flee from sexual immorality. Notice how Paul says, flee sexual immorality and not fight sexual immorality or see how close you can get to sexual immorality before you cross the line.

No, flee. Run away from it. Don't even think of engaging in it. Sexual immorality is so serious and dangerous that Paul's command is for us to flee.

Many times in other places, Paul does say endure. But he doesn't say endure sexual temptation here, does he? He says, run away from it.

Don't even try. And that can take many different forms. Fleeing sexual immorality. So if I'm alone with someone and the situation is becoming sexually compromising, I have to excuse myself and leave.

If I'm messaging someone in a way that I know is becoming sexually charged, I have to end the conversation. If there's a TV series or a book or an app that consistently leads me into sexual temptation, I have to delete it.

[17 : 59] If my imagination is feeding lust, I don't have to entertain it. I run away from that thought. Fleeing can take different forms, but flee nonetheless.

Remember Joseph in Genesis 39 who was tempted by Potiphar's wife. What did he do? He dropped the coat, left it there, and ran.

Don't give it any chance. Just run away from it. Now, why is Paul being so serious here?

He explains in verse 18, the rest of verse 18. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually sins against their own body.

Now, these are difficult words to understand. What do you mean, Paul? Paul is not saying that sexual sin is the only sin that damages your body.

[19 : 07] Obviously, that's not true. Drunkenness, gluttony, self-harm can damage the body. So what does Paul mean?

To understand this, we need to read verse 18 in the context of what Paul has just said. Sexual immorality is distinctive because of what sex does.

It creates a one-flesh union. No other sins do that. All other sins are done outside the body, Paul says, in the sense that when I do all those sins, I use the body as an instrument or a tool for sin. Whether being drunk or using drugs, the body is an instrument for sin. But sexual sin doesn't just use my body as an instrument, it surrenders my body that's supposed to be in union with Christ towards union with unholiness.

unholiness. And in that sense, it's against my body or against my body's status in Christ as His members. My body is a member of Christ.

[20 : 23] My body is united to the Lord. Sexual immorality goes against that. And then Paul gives another reason why we need to flee sexual immorality in verse 19.

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit who is in you whom you have received from God? Friends, our bodies are temples.

Temples. In the Old Testament, like in our Exodus passage, the temple was where God chose to dwell amongst His people. That's what our bodies are.

Again, it's just inconceivable that we do unholy things to God's dwelling place. It doesn't make sense. Sexual immorality is contrary to everything that our bodies are.

Our bodies are members of Christ, temples of the Spirit. Sexual immorality is contrary to both of those. So flee sexual immorality.

[21 : 35] Run away from it. Now, if you have sinned sexually, as I have as well, it's not too late to flee.

Repent and flee. Flee from sexual immorality towards Christ. Run to Him.

It's never too late. The very people that Paul tells to flee are the people who have committed sexual sins. And yet, he constantly calls them throughout the whole letter the redeemed members of Christ, temples of the Spirit, people of God, church of God.

So if you are currently in any sexual sin, an affair, casual sex outside of marriage, visiting prostitutes, or just watching pornography, your sin is serious.

But friends, the grace of Christ is stronger and deeper. if you repent and flee to Him, He will forgive you and welcome you with open arms if you repent and flee to Him.

[23 : 04] And Jesus will give you the kind of love that will satisfy you way more than any sexual immorality ever can. Way more. Trust me, I've been there.

So don't run away from Christ in shame. Flee towards Christ and away from the sin that enslaves you.

If you run to Christ, He will not shame you. He will take that sin and put it in Himself. Nail it on the cross. You are precious to Him.

As Paul says, you are not your own. You were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies. This is the complete opposite to what the Corinthians said, right?

They say, I have the right to do anything. But Paul is saying, no, you are not your own. The Christian life is not about my rights. We have been bought.

[24 : 13] What was the price? The precious blood of Christ, the Son of God, had to come down here and die. That's what redemption means. We are united with Christ as His members, as His bride.

He loves us so much, He gave Himself up for us on the cross. How can we give ourselves up to sexual immorality instead? How can we?

No, we use our bodies to honor Him, to love Him, to express our worship of Him. Do you know what that means to honor God? It means to give God the reverence, the admiration, and the glory that are due to Him.

How much is due to Him? All glory and honor are due to Him. And so, when it comes to applying this passage, of course, the primary application is very clear.

Flee from sexual immorality. Whether that's sex with a prostitute or any sex outside of marriage, the application is flee, run away from it, don't give it any chance. And even other kinds of sexual immorality, porn, looking at another person with lust, sexual messaging with someone who's not your own spouse, the application is flee, don't entertain it.

[25 : 43] But if we read this passage, and that's the only application we get out of it, and we think, check, I've never done that, I don't do that, I've done my duties, then we might get the basic message, but not the full extent of Paul's intention.

Paul wants us to broaden our perspective in his last sentence, honour God with your bodies. That means the Christian life is not only about what we refuse to do with our bodies, it's also about what we choose to do with them.

Our hearts can serve someone with the love of Jesus rather than doing sexual immorality. Our mouths can encourage someone with the gospel.

Our feet can take the gospel to the ends of the earth rather than taking us to see prostitutes. Our eyes can look at another person with dignity rather than lust.

we can honour God with our bodies. So let's keep asking ourselves that question, how can I use this body which doesn't belong to me to honour God?

[27 : 09] How do we eat to honour God? That would be an interesting question to ask, wouldn't it? How do we drink to honour God? How do we enjoy sex to honour God?

How do we work to honour God? How do we watch Netflix to honour God? Friends, we are not our own.

We have been bought at a great price. We are united with Christ so let's honour God with our bodies. Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we praise you for what you have done on the cross. You have bought us with your precious blood. You have set us free from the power of sin and death.

You have united us with yourself. So help us, Lord, please, with the power of your Spirit who is already in us to always remember that we are the holy members of your body and help us to live it out in holiness.

[28 : 16] Amen. Amen.