

To Enable Us to Belong to Him

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Preacher: Wayne Schuller

- [0 : 0 0] Friends, please be seated, and I'll pray. Lord our God, we ask that you would speak to us through your word, the Bible, that you would convict, challenge, rebuke, also encourage and lift us up that our identity and hope would be in Christ alone.
- In his name we ask, Father. Amen. Friends, what we're doing at the moment in church is a new series basically on the theme of why did Jesus come to die?
- And so each week in church up until Easter when we celebrate his death, we're going to look at the cross of Christ from a different angle and look at the different benefits and motivations and things that were won in the cross.
- And we started this really last week by looking at 1 John 4 where we saw that Jesus came to die to be the ultimate expression of the love of God.
- So the death of Jesus is the ultimate statement and manifestation of the love of God for you and me. We saw that he was the atoning sacrifice for sins.
- [1 : 0 7] We saw that because of the cross we could have boldness on the day of judgment. Now that's a good thing to know. And today we're going to look at the cross from a different angle and it's not going to be about what the cross can do for us in heaven.
- It's going to be about what the cross can do for us in our bodies this week. I think one of the exciting things about the Christian life is that the gospel is a kind of a jewel and there are different angles which you can look at the death of Jesus.
- And there are always new things to find about the benefits of why Jesus died. I can imagine when you go to heaven you will get there and think I really had no idea of the value of what was won for me on the cross.
- You will see things from heaven's vantage point that you only just get a glimpse of now and you will worship forever. One of the great teachings I love in this particular chapter today is that we see that Jesus didn't just die for our souls.
- He actually died as well for your body. He didn't just die for soul. He died for body. Christ's death isn't just a blank check called forgiveness that you take and put on the shelf and cash in when you die.
- [2 : 2 7] Christ's death is actually meant to transform the way you live in your body today. There are many philosophies in our world today. Our society doesn't think highly of the body.
- The way people sleep around and discard their bodies. The way they manipulate and use other people's bodies. People think very low of the body in our society.
- And it was the same in the first century in Corinth. People thought very low of their bodies. There was a very pervasive pagan Greek philosophy that the physical body was merely a husk for the eternal soul or for the immortal soul.
- And therefore it didn't really affect you spiritually what you did with your body. That was the kind of Corinthian lie. But actually Christianity does not think that. Christianity actually thinks the body matters.
- That body and soul work together. And that you are physical and spiritual together. In fact, the Christian worldview says spiritual things encompass the physical.

[3 : 30] The spiritual realm is not something apart from the physical world, but it encompasses our physical world. So with that in mind, let's look at what Paul teaches. And in particular, he starts with where the Corinthians have come from spiritually.

And this is a stunning text. Verse 9. Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? It's a warning to the Corinthians about people disqualifying themselves for the kingdom of God.

Do not be deceived. We're easily tricked in these sort of areas. Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers.

None of these, Paul says, will inherit the kingdom of God. All these sins, all this list of different sins are serious. All of them.

Notice Paul talks about not just sexual sins, though many of them are sexual sins. Notice he talks about things like the greedy, thieves, robbers, idolaters.

[4 : 42] It's not just a list of sexual sin. These sins, if they characterize your life, if you serve and worship these sins, if you give in to them, if they define you, then you won't inherit the kingdom of God.

Because God is holy, therefore his kingdom is holy, therefore to enter his kingdom, we need to let God's grace transform us into the holiness that he wants to produce in us, if we are to make it.

And the beautiful thing here is actually it's not just or even a judgmental text. It's actually a text of grace. Because in verse 11, he says, this is what some of you used to be.

It's so funny because the list is actually not a list of society's sins. It's a list of the church's sins before they were Christians or, you know, early in their life.

It's a list of the way we've acted. But he says, that is what some of you used to be. And the beautiful words, 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.

[5 : 52] In the gospel, God has acted decisively in our lives. And change in behavior is meant to flow out from a change of our heart. See, Paul doesn't say, this is what you were and you repented.

I think it's by implication they've stopped doing these things. What he says is, this is what you were and God acted in your life. The spirit of God acted. The gospel of God acted.

You were washed. Your sins were washed away. When you trusted in Jesus, all those sins were washed away. Not just the light sins, but all the sins. You were sanctified.

When you became a Christian, God set you apart for him. You belong to him. You are his. You are for him. And you are justified. You were declared righteous in Christ.

And so your identity as a Christian believer is not as a sinner, as a fornicator, or as an idolater, or a greedy. Your identity is in Christ. You are a Christian.

[6 : 53] We are not to be defined by our sin. Now, friends, that's clear. That's the gospel. For example, the challenging Corinth was, why don't we just keep on sinning then?

If we're free Christians, why don't we just keep on indulging in those lusts? Why don't we just keep on being greedy? Why don't we keep on doing all these wrong things we did?

Why should we change? And so Paul then addresses these kind of issues. Now, the Corinthians had a lot of mottos. They had a lot of slogans, which were half-truths, which Paul quotes.

And it's not really in the Greek. There's no quote marks in the Greek. There's no punctuation. So we have to work out when Paul is speaking, when is he quoting them and when is he correcting them?

It's a little bit easier because our Bibles do it for us. They don't always get it right, though. Verse 12, the quotes are right. The Corinthians would say, all things are lawful for me.

[7 : 53] That is, the Corinthians would say, we have freedom in Christ. We are not under law. We are not under the old covenant law, food laws or whatever laws. We have Christian freedom. The truth has set us free.

All things are lawful. That's a half-truth. Paul comes back with, but not all things are beneficial. You may be free in Christ, but not all things are good for you.

Not all things are good for you spiritually. Not all things are good for you in your life. Not all things are good for your relationship with God. One of the characteristic things about Christianity is that we are not a rule-based religion.

And you may have heard the summary of comparing Christianity to other religions, is that other religions say to do what is right or to get to heaven or nirvana, whatever you've got to do, do, do, do, do, do.

Christianity says, done in Christ. He has done it for us. So it's not do, do, do. It's done. And we are forgiven and free in him. But that doesn't mean, Paul says, we can use grace as a license for sin.

[8 : 58] It's dishonoring to God to do things that are sinful, that are disobedient to him. That's not beneficial to us, Paul says. So you may say, Corinthians, all things are lawful for me, but not all things are beneficial.

And he also says, I will not be dominated by anything. If Christ has set you free, then you shouldn't be dominated by sin anymore.

You see, it's one thing to say I'm a free Christian, but it's another thing if you're trapped in sin. Leon Morris has written, Christian liberty is an unbounded opportunity to love, not a means of gratifying our own sinful desires.

You see, so easily sin can entrap us and dominate. It's very obvious, and I think our pornographers know this. They know that if they send you an email with a picture and you click on it, you are trapped.

And they just reel you in. Our advertisers know this. Our ads for our brothels and our strip bars know this. They put big billboards on Hoddle Street in Richmond to entice people.

[10 : 12] They know that if they can grab your imagination, you'll be enslaved and mastered. You'll be on their leash. I have many friends, good friends who I care about, family members, who through repeated casual relationships, sleeping around, have given away so much of themselves.

When you sleep with someone, you give away part of yourself, and there's not much left. And that makes them even more desperate for a relationship. And the cycle just continues. They are dominated and enslaved.

It takes real courage and guts, I think, to say to someone, I will not give you my body till you're married to me, till you're publicly promised to stick by me. There are few forces in life as powerful as sexual arousal.

Paul the apostle knows this, and he's a single godly apostle. Paul knows that sex is God's glue for a relationship, to glue a husband and a wife together.

Used inappropriately, without discipline, we can quickly become addicted or trapped in a kind of prison of self-gratification.

[11 : 24] So Paul says, you may be free in Christ, but don't be mastered by anything. Now the Corinthians have all these slogans. Paul just likes to kind of put one up and shoot it down.

The next one is, they would say, and here the quotes I think are wrong in your Bible, but you'll see. The Corinthians would say, verse 13, food is meant for the stomach, and the stomach for food, and God will destroy both one and the other.

Unquote. I think that's the Corinthian kind of way of talking, saying that it's just all physical, you know, food is like sex, it's a physical thing that you need to satisfy, it doesn't really matter who or where or when you fulfill that, and God is going to destroy your body anyway.

So the Corinthians would say, it doesn't affect your relationship with God, what you do in the body, because God's going to destroy the body anyway. Friends, that's wrong. That's not the gospel.

That's not Christianity, which has a high view of the body. Paul says, the body is not meant for fornication, that is, sex outside of marriage, or sex before marriage, but for the Lord.

[12 : 28] The body is meant for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. God cares about your physical body. God cares about the flesh that you are, that you are in right now.

That is you. That is your body. It's a resurrection kind of thing to believe, because he says, and God raised the Lord, and will also raise us by his power.

The resurrection of Jesus is God's way of saying, our bodies matter. Jesus was raised in his body. It was transformed, but it was the same Jesus. They could see him and recognize him, even though he had changed into something more glorious.

It's true like us. The body we have now is the body you will have in heaven. Yes, it will be resurrected. Yes, it will be transformed. It will be without sickness or sin.

So maybe it will be a healthier body. Maybe we'll all be muscly. I don't know. But it will be you. I will be able to recognize you in heaven, just as Jesus was recognized. Don't think that...

[13 : 32] We sometimes say, you know, God's going to give me a new body in heaven, as if I'm going to look like Brad Pitt or something in heaven. It will be these Brad Pitts walking around. You will know me. I'll be Wayne Shuler. I presume I'll have blonde hair.

Do you know what I mean? So if that's your body, if that's your eternity, transformed through resurrection, though it will be, then that's worth treasuring now. That's worth taking care of now.

And certainly not worth wrecking through sexual sin. Your body is for the Lord, and the Lord is for your body. We are very...

We want to be positive about physicality. We want to be positive about our bodies. One of the things I learned, it was stunning for me, both being married and a parent, is that it's a very physical life, being a parent.

It's very physical. There's lots of nappies to change and lots of hugging and touching. You can't not be physical if you're a parent. And I think God has wired the world to be physical.

[14 : 32] And maybe this is my bit of redemption for saying last week, I don't like hugs. But, you know, we live in a physical world. We actually are meant to be valuing the physical. And so I...

Maybe after church last week, everyone was offering to hug me. I think you thought I was actually crying out for a hug. I'm not. I'm not. But we do want to say, our bodies are for the Lord.

The Lord is for our bodies. They matter to God. Not only that, our bodies are members of Christ. Verse 15. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute?

Never. You see, in the Corinthian church, it was not shameful to go to a prostitute. Even though there were no real brothels, you would actually go to a pagan temple to go to a prostitute.

And it may not be talking about going to an adult woman. It may be talking about going to a child of any gender. That was common and almost unshameful in the pagan culture of the first century.

[15 : 32] It's becoming that way almost in Australia in terms of prostitution. I had a job at Melbourne University, which is sort of an honourable institution where people openly talked about visiting brothels without shame.

In Corinth, there were Christians doing it, unembarrassed. I was saying, well, it's just my body. It's just satisfying a desire. It's just getting a job done. It doesn't affect my spiritual walk with God.

But Paul teaches that sex is God's glue. Sex unites someone, people as one flesh, one to another. The husband and wife will be one flesh. And so you cannot take someone who's a member of Christ and unite them to a pagan prostitute.

That's blasphemy. That's sacrilege to Christ. God is honoured by marriages where husband and wife unite under his blessing and love and enjoy the gift of sex.

It's part of your spiritual duty, I think, of marriage to do that. Not just to bring, to come to church as a couple, not just to read the Bible and praise a couple, but actually to enjoy sex as a couple.

[16 : 38] That's your spiritual duty as Christians. But if you're single or even if you're married, going to a prostitute's sexual immorality dishonours Christ because your body is a member with Christ.

Anyone united to the Lord is one spirit with him. So friends, your link to Christ is physical. It's bad for Christ to be sexually immoral.

And also, it's not just bad for Christ, it's bad for you. Verse 18. Shun or flee fornication. Every sin that a person commits is outside the body, but the fornicator sins against the body itself.

That may be another Corinthian quote, that sins are outside the body. But Paul says, the fornicator sins against the body itself. That is, your sexual sin is not removed from you, it actually will do damage to you and will cause a lot of damage.

And you can see that by a lot of the people who are sexually immoral are really hurt people. They're really broken people even though they put up a facade of having it together. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you that you have from God?

[17 : 49] You are not your own. See how much God loves our bodies that we are temples of the Holy Spirit. And when we sin sexually, we damage that temple.

We dishonour, we blaspheme the spirit, the sacrilege, and we hurt ourselves. It's suicide and sacrilege together. If sex is like the glue to bond husband and wife, every time you give your body away and you glue something and rip it apart, something is broken between the two and then you do it again and after a while the glue just doesn't work and the pieces are shattered.

That's what happens to people. It's ironic that sexual sin is suicidal in a sense. What we do in the name of pleasure ends up hurting us the most.

Don't believe the lie that those who sleep around are getting pleasure out of it or in the long term, you know, happy from that. They are not. If you dig deeper with those people, you'll see how broken they've become.

Don't believe the lie that pornography doesn't matter, that it corrupts, it corrodes you. It not only dishonours God, the Holy Spirit living in you, that you are a member of Christ, it actually corrupts you and hurts you.

[19 : 04] Friends, isn't it a wonderful thing to think we are temples of the Holy Spirit? This building is an excellent building, but the Holy Spirit came into this building this morning when you walked in.

It wasn't here already. You brought the Holy Spirit with you. You, your body, is the temple of the Holy Spirit. It's a precious thing, the Holy Spirit.

So friends, be holy because God dwells in you. And finally, friends, I love this final verse, verse 20, and it takes us back to the cross of Christ and what the cross has done and why Jesus died.

For you were bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body. The Corinthians would have hated that because they would have thought glorifying God is a spiritual act outside the body.

But no, we glorify God by holy living, by worship in the body. We were bought with a price. What was the price God paid for you and me? Well, our real estate agents love to tell us getting a valuation done.

[20 : 09] They're always offering to give me valuations. I don't own the house. And they say, what is it worth? It's worth what anyone will pay for it. What did God pay for you? He paid the blood of his only son.

I'm not sure I feel uncomfortable saying I'm worth the value of Christ, but that's the price he paid. He paid the death, the painful death of Jesus.

God has bought us with a price, a heavy price that puts a value on you and on your body. And it also takes away your freedom. You are not your own. God owns you.

You are, in effect, God's property. You are not an autonomous individual who has control over their own body. God owns your body. He owns you. So on the cross of Christ, the big point, he did more than win you eternal life in heaven.

He bought your body. It was a high price to pay. So honour God in your body. Glorify God in your body. It was wonderful yesterday to be at the men's breakfast and to have Rob Chu challenge us as men about our physical health.

[21 : 18] And I think that's a good application of this verse. It's a secondary one. The primary application is sexual, but the secondary application would be be healthy with your body. Men in particular, we need to hear that because we don't live as long on average as women.

God says, I've bought your body with the blood of Christ, so worship me, serve me in your body, in purity, in chastity and virginity and singleness, and in faithful, exclusive marriage for life.

Christ died so that you could be washed, sanctified and justified. Christ died so that you would be united to Jesus in your body, so that your body would be a member of him, so that your body would be a temple of the Holy Spirit, so that your bodies could belong to him in anticipation of a great resurrection of that body.

So friends, glorify God in your body. Let's pray. Lord God, we thank you for Paul's hard teaching and challenging teaching. I pray for any here who feel trapped in some of the sins he has listed or feel dominated by them.

I pray that you would give them conviction, repentance, you would help them to confess their sin to someone and diffuse that sin. I pray, Father, that you will help us to delight in our bodies, to delight in purity, in godliness.

[22 : 46] For our married couples, we pray that you would help them to delight and serve each other with their bodies. For those who are single, I pray that you will give them contentment and help us to support them and encourage them in their singleness.

And Father, we thank you so much that our bodies belong to you. We thank you for the price you paid for them, the blood of your Son, the Lord Jesus. Amen.