**Honor God with Your Body**

February 14, 2021

1 Corinthians 6:1-20

Key Verse 6:19-20 “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.”

Our culture puts a lot of emphasis on the body. People eat only certain foods and work out to have the best body possible. Some even have plastic surgeries on their bodies. They look for just the right clothes to highlight their bodies. For those who can’t measure up Hollywood movie stars, they develop self-hatred with many body image issues. At the same time, many people use their bodies only for pleasure without regards to their bodies. For example, brain scan shows that brains of pornography users are similar to those of drug addicts. Also pornography users have hard time to have intimacy with people of opposite sex. It is damaging to their physical and mental health. In Corinth, they believed in Gnostic dualism, which claimed that the spirit was good and matter, including the body, was evil. Two schools of thought developed from this premise: Epicureans and Stoics. Epicureans held that since the body was evil anyway, they could indulge in any kind of sinful behavior and it would not affect their spirit. Stoics held that since the body was evil, it should be punished by mistreating it in various ways. Both of them are wrong but their influence was damaging. Though the Corinthian Christians had accepted Christ, their way of thinking had not been changed. In particular, they thought that Christ had redeemed their spirits but not their bodies. So some of them justified going to prostitutes. It is like some people justifying their sexual immorality, saying that as long as their hearts are kept pure, they are still virgins even though they slept with many people. Paul corrects the Corinthians’ wrong view of the body, saying, “The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord…Honor God with your bodies.”

Look at verse 1. “If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord’s people?” Whenever people live together, there will be disputes. So nations and states have established court systems in which people can sue each other to resolve their disputes. In Corinth, there was a highly developed legal system based on Roman law and lawsuits were common. These days we see many advertisements of attorneys who want to recruit injured people and persuade them to sue others. Medical doctors have been hit hard with malpractice lawsuits. They in turn pass the costs to their patients. The North America seems to have gone crazy with lawsuits. One of the most famous lawsuits among brothers is by Koch brothers. William Koch, one of the US richest men sued two of his brothers accusing them of cheating in a business deal. He sued for $2 billion. It was very ugly, and it lasted 10 years. The brother-to-brother hatred came out. All these lawsuits come from the belief that we will be happy if we have a lot of money. In Luke 12:13, someone said to Jesus, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” Then Jesus rebuked him, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you? Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.”

Paul rebukes the Corinthians for taking their disputes to civil courts instead of to the Lord’s people. Paul says basically, “It is a sin for a Christian to sue another Christian.” In a lawsuit, no one wins except Satan. They did this, in part, out of their spiritual ignorance. Look at verse 3a. “Do you not know that we will judge angels?” This is really an amazing thing to think about. Someday the Lord Jesus Christ will come back to earth, and set up a Kingdom on the earth, and we will reign with him in that Kingdom. Even angels will be judged by us. (2Pe 2:4) If we can judge angels, we are perfectly cable of judging everyday problems which are trivial before God.

Look at verse 7. “The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?” When Christians fight with each other, Satan shrieks with sadistic joy and becomes the head cheerleader to stir up more fighting. In this way he wants to destroy the church. That is why Paul said that they were completely defeated. Christians must not fight with each other over material things or trivial matters. Paul strongly encouraged them, “Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?” As Christians we must yield, even though we are wronged or cheated. This pleases God and leads to God’s blessing. This is the way to true victory, and to grow in the image of Christ. But Paul clearly warns that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God. Some people are deceived, thinking they can live a wicked life and still go to the kingdom of God. Look at verses 9b-10. “Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.” Let’s note that slanderers and swindlers are included here. They are wicked people who defame others and cheat others for money.

Look at verse 11. “And that is what some of you were. 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.” Paul their shepherd knew these people well. Earlier he had described their past lives as foolish, weak, lowly and despised (1:27,28). Now he says they had been downright sinful, in so many embarrassing ways. They in no way deserved to be included in the kingdom of God. But God saved these Corinthian Christians by his one-sided grace. It says that we all were “washed,” “sanctified” and “justified.” God cleansed us of all our dirty sins. God called us to a holy life. God justified us from all our wrongdoings in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. It means with his authority. By the authority of Jesus who died for our sins and rose again, we are forgiven and cleansed. Through our faith in Jesus God now sees us very differently. God sees us not as guilt-ridden, rotten people to be destroyed, but as his lovely children. God welcomes us to himself as his own sons and daughters. It also says “by the Spirit of our God.” When we repent and believe in Jesus who died for us and rose again, God gives us the Holy Spirit, who changes us from within. It is the power of the Holy Spirit who enables us to truly change from incorrigible sinners to God’s precious and holy people. In reminding us of God’s grace in Jesus, Paul helps us see who we really are in Christ. We are those God has called out of this messed up, sin-sick world. God the Father, through his Son Jesus and the Holy Spirit, has made us different persons. If we see ourselves as chronic sinners doomed to fail, then that is what we will do. But if we see ourselves as those God has washed, sanctified and justified, then we can renew our struggle against our old sinful tendencies and the pull and temptations of this world. We shouldn’t regard ourselves or others from a worldly point of view; we need to hold onto the truth that both we and our Christian brothers and sisters are new creations in Christ (2Co5:17). If we believe this, we will treat others differently, the way Jesus would.

In the second half of this chapter Paul turns to another disturbing issue in this church. Some of these Christian men were going to prostitutes. And it wasn’t just a shameful moral lapse—they were justifying it. Look at verses 12-13a. “‘I have the right to do anything,’ you say—but not everything is beneficial…You say, ‘Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both.” Some were claiming that, now that they believed in Jesus and received his grace, they had the right to do anything. The verb “to corinthianize” meant to have sex with a prostitute. That is how attached Corinth was to that kind of life. Though the Corinthian Christians had accepted Christ, their way of thinking had not been changed. Paul went on to correct the Corinthians’ wrong view of the body. Look at verse 13b. “The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.” When Christ died for our sins, he redeemed not only our spirits, but our bodies as well. Christ redeemed our whole man so that our whole man might belong to him. Christ wants to dwell in our whole being, body, mind and spirit. Look at verse 13b again. “The Lord for the body.” The Lord is interested in our bodies, their welfare, and their proper use. God wants our bodies to be presented as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to him. (Ro 12:1)

However, just as man’s Fall had a two-step process: immediate death to the soul and the beginning of death to the body, so redemption in Christ has a two-step process. When we accept Christ, our soul is made alive immediately with everlasting life. The body, however, begins a process of renewal or sanctification. Bad habits and false ways of thinking must be dealt with until we live a holy life in the body. We can understand this in the life of the Israelites through Exodus. Exodus is the exact portrayal of God’s salvation work. Pharaoh symbolizes Satan, who ruthlessly oppresses sinners. The Israelites had no power to get out of bondage, and sinners cannot escape the gravity of sin. However, God provided the way through the blood of the Lamb (Jn 1:29). Yet redemption was just a beginning, not the end. After escaping Egypt, they needed to be disciplined in the wilderness to overcome the bad habits they had learned as slaves. God gave them the law and trained them to live by it. God gave them daily bread, and helped them to get up early, dedicate their day to God, and to work hard. The purpose of his redemption was to make them a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. In the same way, we Christians need to overcome our past sinful habits and lifestyle. Our bodies must be sanctified. Our daily lives should be made holy. We should become more like Jesus every day through godly living and divine discipline. Finally, our bodies will be fully sanctified when Jesus comes again. Verse 14 says, “By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.” Our bodies will be imperishable, glorious, powerful and spiritual (1 Co 15:42b-44). There will be no more sinful nature. There will be no more temptation. We will enjoy real freedom in the kingdom of God.

Look at verse 15a. “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself?” It is unthinkable to unite the members of Christ with a prostitute. Some Corinthians thought that sex was like eating a good meal. But Paul corrects them in verse 16. “Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, ‘The two will become one flesh.’” Sex is a special God-given gift that produces a mysterious union. C. S. Lewis says in The Screwtape Letters, “Every time a man and a woman enter into a sexual relationship, a spiritual bond is established between them which must be eternally enjoyed or eternally endured.” One can eat a good meal and forget about it several hours later. However, no one can just forget about a sexual partner. This is why the gift of sex must be used properly. It is given by God for his good purpose, to be enjoyed between husband and wife within the bounds of marriage. On the other hand, if we misuse the gift of sex, our bodies are damaged and our characters are distorted. We become totally useless and miserable. So from a young age we must keep our bodies pure. Then we can live happily in God’s providence.

Verses 18-20 give us clear direction on how to use our bodies. First, we must flee from sexual immorality. This means we must run away from it as soon as we detect it. If we see a bad image on the computer or television, we must shut it off immediately. If we see a provocative member of the opposite sex, we must run away immediately like Joseph in Genesis and St. Augustine. If we hear the enticing words of a promiscuous person, we must close our ears and sing, “Holy, Holy, Holy,” with a loud voice. Admittedly, it is not easy for young people who are full of hormones and energy to overcome lustful desires. But we must remember that giving in to sexual temptation causes grave damage to oneself. Second, we must honor God with our bodies. Look at verses 19-20. “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.” Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. God lives in us and wants to use us for his purpose. Therefore, we have great potential to do amazing things in our lifetimes. When we recognize God’s presence in us and pray for his guidance, we can find many ways in which we need to develop our bodies to be used for the glory of God. This has led many people to discipline themselves from a young age to be used for a holy purpose. John Wesley was a second generation believer. His mother Susanna trained him to work hard, study hard, and live a pure life. From the time he could walk and talk, she taught him to read. Later, at Oxford, he formed a holy club with George Whitefield and others to train themselves for God’s use. When he prepared himself in this way, he was used greatly by God to spread the gospel to the world in the 18th century and to found the Methodist Church.

Practically, how can we honor God with our bodies? We must discipline our physical bodies by eating proper food—not junk food—and sleeping regularly—not staying up late to watch Youtube—and by getting enough exercise by working out. Which is most important? body, mind and spirit. Some people may say spirit. But they are all connected. A sound body is the vessel of a sound mind. If you are sick physically, your spirit becomes also weak. You cannot live for the glory of God with sick bodies. Let’s pray that we may have a right attitude toward our bodies and use them properly and in this way honor God with our bodies.

Big Idea: Honor God with our bodies