
My Body

1 Cor 6:12-17

I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. A beautiful blond, a senior in high school share this with her Bible class: “When we date, we start giving gifts, like flowers or candy. When a couple becomes engaged, they give special things—a diamond and very personal things. The most personal gift that I can ever give is myself. I have nothing more precious to give. When I marry, I want to give my husband the best that I have—my whole self as completely as I can.”
1. Is she not precisely right? Indeed, the most precious thing we can give to our spouses is ourselves.
 2. As right as that girl is, how odd is that sentiment in the modern world?
 - a. How many high school seniors have not engaged in casual sex because it was fun?
 - b. Two years ago, some researchers published a study in *American Journal of Sociology* a study of 832 high school students.
 - 573 of the students reported at least one sexual encounter within the past year.
 - Among those 573 students, there were 63 couples, with no outside partners, while there were 288 students involved in a network of liaisons among one another.
- B. If you’re anything like I am, you’d really prefer not to discuss sex in a forum such as this one.
1. At times, quite honestly, it is quite awkward to stand before and discuss sexuality, especially those texts of Scripture which get quite graphic, and there are several of those.
 - a. Some might say, “Find something else to preach about; we really feel as uncomfortable hearing it as you feel preaching it.”
 - b. Of course, that is not at all the biblical position.
 - We discussed last Sunday night Micaiah’s statement to Ahab: “Whatever the LORD says to me, that I will speak.”
 - We also recall the Paul’s farewell address to the Ephesian elders: “I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God” (Acts 20:27). Sexuality, because God made us sexual creatures, is part of that whole will of God.
 2. I’m not aware of any problem with sexuality in the congregation this morning: not a single one.
 - a. Honestly, I think it’s better to preach texts such as the one before us this morning before there are problems in a congregation; as the old cliché goes: “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”
 - b. Paul is going to provide prevention for immorality himself in chapter 7, but before he can get there, he must tell the Corinthians to clean house.
 - As we have been discussing from this book, the Corinthians had an adulterous relationship among them and they boasted about it.
 - That dispute seems to have spilled over and caused a legal battle between one or more members of the church.
 - Now, Paul returns to the theme of sexual immorality. As Paul writes about sexuality, he tells us three things about my body: MY BODY IS FOR THE LORD, MY BODY WILL BE RAISED BY THE LORD, & MY BODY IS ONE WITH THE LORD.

- II. MY BODY IS FOR THE LORD, vv. 12-13.
- A. "Everything is permissible for me"—but not everything is beneficial. 'Everything is permissible for me'—but I will not be mastered by anything. 'Food for the stomach and the stomach for food'—but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body."
- B. "Everything is permissible for me" & "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food" were slogans used by philosophers in the ancient world to argue for a hedonistic lifestyle, especially as it related to sexuality.
1. Many Greek philosophers argued that casual sex was acceptable as long as that behavior did not control the person; the Cynics, one group of philosophers in Paul's day, would carry out their desires in public.
 2. The slogans Paul uses here were used in antiquity quite like the slogans "It's my body" and "I'm not hurting anybody" in our own day.
 3. In quoting these slogans, Paul is using a rhetorical device known as diatribe.
 - a. In a diatribe, the orator would construct a false opponent, claim the opponent would say certain things and then destroy the false opponent's viewpoints; it would be like Hillary Clinton going to a campaign rally, saying here's what Rudy Giuliani would say, and here's why Giuliani is wrong.
 - b. We do a form of this all the time. If we're in a discussion with someone discussing some issue and we begin playing "devil's advocate," we're basically doing what Paul was doing here.
- C. Paul twice declares that everything is permissible.
1. There are some scholars who say that Paul is referencing the freedom we have in Christ when he writes that everything is permissible.
 2. That view, however, doesn't adequately deal with the word "but" in Greek; the word shows a contrast between two diverse concepts.
 3. Have you ever an argument with your spouse when he or she said something and you said, "Whatever, but here's what I think"? It seems to me that Paul is saying, "OK, look, the philosophers and maybe some of you Corinthians are saying you can do whatever you want sexually, but here's the truth."
- D. Even though some claimed in Corinth that everything was permissible, not everything is beneficial.
1. The KJV uses the word "expedient" here, and Paul is using the term in a sense that we speak of "expedient" in the church. The pulpit is an expedient in that it aides worship by providing me a place to set my notes and Bible; it doesn't change worship but helps it. The pitch pipe is an expedient in that it aides worship by providing the correct pitch for singing; it doesn't change worship but helps it.
 2. The ancients claimed that they could fulfill their sexual appetites however they wanted, but Paul declares that's not helpful.
 - a. Why is that not helpful, beneficial, or expedient?
 - In the previous paragraph, Paul declared that those who habitually do such shall not inherit the kingdom of God.
 - Would not such behavior, therefore, take me further from God rather than close to him?
 - b. We dare never think that sexual immorality is helpful to us.
 - How many high school and college students think, "If I don't find some avenue to release this appetite, I'm going to be agitated and not be able to perform my best"?
 - How many married people might think, "My spouse is too frigid. If I don't find some fulfillment of these desires, I'm not going to be as good a husband or father"?
 - How many engaged couples think, "We're going to get married anyway. I need to know as much about my future spouse as possible"?
 - But, we must understand such behavior is never beneficial.

- E. Neither will Paul allow himself to be mastered by such behavior.
1. Paul uses a future tense here which demonstrates a decision of the will; in other words, Paul declares that he has made his mind up that he will not allow his sexual appetite to control him.
 2. How many people in the modern world allow sexuality to control them? Sex, for them, is not a special part of marriage, but it is something they must do, like an alcoholic with his bottle.
- F. Paul uses another slogan which was quite prevalent in Corinth: “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food.”
1. Corinthian philosophers argued that sexuality was just like eating, a purely physical act, and it should in no way be frowned upon.
 2. It is very true that sex has a very physical component to it—God created us as physical creatures, but, of course, God did not create us as only physical beings, for we are made in his image.
 3. The reason, according to Paul that we cannot do whatever we want physically is that God is going to destroy the body.
 - a. When Jesus comes again, these bodies will be destroyed and we will be given new bodies.
 - b. Therefore, why engage in physical acts which are going to jeopardize our eternal inheritance?
 - That premise has a larger context that just sexuality.
 - Why spend all our time being greedy and attempting to obtain more and more things when God is going to destroy everything at the return of Jesus?
 - Why spend time having a good time with alcohol when these bodies and that alcohol will be no more when Jesus comes again?
 - Why do anything physical that is going to take us further from God when physical things are not going to last?
 - Are you this morning spending your time with the things of this world when they aren’t going to last?
- G. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.
1. Although God created as physical and sexual creatures, he never, ever intended these physical, sexual bodies be used for immorality. Since God created our bodies the way that he did, does it not stand to reason that he has the right to regulate how we use our bodies?
 2. The body is for the Lord, for his service. And, the Lord is for the body, for, as we’ll see next week, he dwells in that body in a very special way.
 3. How are we using our bodies? Are we using our bodies for the service of the Lord or for immorality?

III. MY BODY WILL BE RAISED BY THE LORD, v. 14.

- A. “By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.”
- B. The Corinthians seem to have had a lot of problems over the resurrection of the dead.
1. There are many people in our own day who have a lot of questions and even get caught up in error over Armageddon, the return of the Lord, and other such subjects.
 2. Paul is going to deal with the Corinthians’ problems in detail over in chapter 15, but here he simply declares that the same God who raised Jesus will use the same power he used in his resurrection to raise the Corinthians.
- C. The resurrection does not simply have implications as we stand beside the casket of a loved one who died in Christ, but it has implications for how we use our bodies. Since Jesus raised Jesus and will raise us also, we cannot use these soon-to-be-glorified bodies however we chose.

IV. MY BODY IS ONE WITH THE LORD, vv. 15-17.

- A. “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never!”
1. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul is going to write at length about the body of Christ and how each member of that body is part of Christ and is to be used in that body in a special way.
 2. There have been several works written by our brethren and others declaring that the church is the modern incarnation of Jesus.
 - a. While some of those works have taken extreme views on certain matters of doctrine, I believe the premise of those works is valid: Jesus has ascended back to the Father and the church is to be the incarnation of Christ in the modern world: we are to be his lips speaking the good news, his hands offering compassion to the downtrodden, and the like.
 - b. Because the church is the present manifestation of Christ in the world, we are members of Christ.
 3. Should we then take ourselves as members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute?
 - a. Paul uses a very strong work in Greek for “never”—it basically means “Absolutely not!”
 - b. Corinth was full of prostitution—There were a variety of temples in Corinth where prostitution was practiced; many young girls were abandoned by their parents and these girls often became slaves who were forced into prostitution very early; and, in the Roman world, prostitution was considered an acceptable alternative to adultery.
- B. In the next verse, Paul makes clear why one could never take a member of Christ and join him with a prostitute—“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,” v. 16.
1. There is one important message we need to understand about sexuality, whether biblical sanctioned or sinful: Sexuality is not just a physical act. That destroys the notion of harmless casual sex.
 2. Why can’t we just have sex with whomever we choose? Simply because the sex act makes the two individuals one.
 - a. In the OT, we find the idea of becoming one flesh in Gn 2:24. The broad context there has to do with much more than sexuality, but the context is one of humans being physical creatures: God causes Adam to go into a deep sleep, took one of his ribs, created the woman, and brought her to Adam. Adam then declared that Eve was “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” Immediately following Gn 2:24, we find the statement that Adam and Eve were naked, obviously physically naked.
 - b. From that context, Paul, guided by the Spirit, takes the principle of being bound with a husband or wife sexually and declares that is the only person with whom we can be so bound.
 - Notice carefully the words Moses records in Gn 2:24: “For this reason [the fact that woman was made from man] a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they [the husband and wife] will become one flesh.”
 - Only a husband and wife can become one flesh. I can’t become one flesh with my boyfriend/girlfriend, a prostitute, or someone I met on a business trip. Because of the intimacy involved in both marriage in general and the sexual act in particular, sexuality, the most intimate of physical acts, belongs only in a relationship where we have the closest broad intimacy with anyone on earth.
- C. We are to unite ourselves to our spouses: physically, emotionally, financially, and in many other ways.
1. It’s a grave mistake to say that either the union or the intimacy in marriage only revolves around sexuality, for there are so many ways we become intimate in a marriage.

- a. For example, Tammy & I have become more and more like one another in the years we've been married—sometimes, it is frightening the extent to which we think alike.
 - b. A couple weeks or so ago, Tammy & I were in the car on the way to the bank. I was driving, so Tammy was filling out the deposit slip. She said, "Honey, how much cash do you think we should get back?" I said, "How much do you think we should get back?" She gave me her answer, and I burst out laughing. You know why? I was going to suggest the same amount.
 2. That stuff happens to us all the time, and I don't think it's coincidence. We have, in many ways, become one person since we married, and I know those of you who have been married much longer than I could give story after story after story.
- D. While the closest intimacy we could ever hope to have is with our spouse, we have a spiritual intimacy with the Lord, an intimacy we can't have with anyone else: "He who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit," v. 17.
1. Some might think, "What on earth is this statement doing in this paragraph?" On one level, it does seem to break the flow of Paul's argument, for Paul has been discussing physical intimacy prior to this verse and he's going to discuss it in the verses to follow.
 2. However, it's a mistake to divorce what we do in the body with who we are spiritually.
 - a. There have been several in the past who have done precisely that—they have said that Christians could do whatever they wanted in the flesh and that did not affect their spirits.
 - b. Paul demonstrates right here that's not at all right, but how we live in our bodies affects who we are spiritually.
 3. Because we are one with the Lord in spirit, we have an intimacy with the Lord that those outside of him simply cannot have. Are we maintaining that intimacy? Are we living in the body—sexually and in every other way—how God would have us live?