

July 3, 2022 CPC Morning Worship – 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 “Temples for Him”

Intro: Good morning! At our General Assembly meeting 2 weeks ago, one of the preachers spoke about how, at every point in her history, the church has faced significant questions and issues. He said that these questions and issues are usually difficult in the moment, but that ultimately, the Lord uses these issues to form and build His church. He went on to say that the issue we’re facing in the 21st century church is... anthropology, the study of mankind. This may not have been the first word that came to your mind – you may have thought of sexuality or justice, but anthropology covers it all. And today, anthropology is often closely linked and even fused with sexuality.

- I certainly can’t cover sexuality to exhaustion today, so I recommend that you read the PCA’s Study Committee Report on Human Sexuality, as it speaks with clarity, grace, and truth about marriage, humanity, sin, and sexuality. Even the 1st 12 statements are well worth your time.

The truth is that every period in history will have views that especially conflict with Scripture, so it’s essential for us to know God’s perspective on us as humans so we can live faithfully for him.

Text Background: In our passage, Paul addresses the fact that some men in the Corinthian church were going to prostitutes and justifying their actions as totally within bounds. This might be unthinkable for us today, but the Greeks looked at the spiritual realm as good and the physical realm as bad. They believed the soul was immortal and that the body was not. So, sex was viewed as an appetite to be satisfied, just like eating food. And these men were taking this and saying, “I am of the Spirit, what I do sexually won’t last, so I’ll indulge it.” By embracing the thinking of their day, they had fallen into great sin.

Our Context: We live in a different day, but we have similar (and arguably greater) confusion on sexuality. We live in a consumer and sexually promiscuous culture – even many kids movies today have jokes with sexual overtones. In his book, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, Carl Trueman points out that today, selfhood is viewed in inner psychological terms and happiness is an internal feeling. Because of this, sex and personal sexual expression have become *the way* that live out who we are. In other words, for many, sexual fulfillment is viewed as the pinnacle of the good life and how we find happiness.¹ Even if all of this didn’t impact us (which it does), because of the Fall, we are *all* corrupt and have sinful desires (that are themselves sin) and are not of God.² We’re all greatly enticed by these desires and some of us have been taken by the ways of our day so that we express our internal urges with our bodies for happiness. Others of us know that bodily indulgence is wrong, but are somewhat unsure about how to view our bodies. We may be wary of the dangers of bodily sin, or we may be ashamed of our bodies, so we embrace a kind of spiritual asceticism where we don’t have much regard for our bodies. It’s to all this that our text speaks. And our text tells us that

¹ Trueman, *Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 205. Thanks to Rousseau, Freud and others.

² Rom. 7:14-23

[Proposition:] in Christ, we are to flee sexual immorality and pursue bodily purity for God's glory. (repeat) 2 Reasons why this is this case, then reflect on how we pursue this purity.

Pray

Reason 1: Sexual immorality is a perversion away from what He made our bodies for (v.12-13, 16, 18)

- Look in v.12-13. In the first half of 12, Paul quotes a common Corinthian statement "all things are lawful/determinable for me." Because they had a low and limited view of the body and saw themselves as spiritual people, the Corinthians thought that what they did in the body didn't last. The phrase about food and the stomach in v.13 is similar. They would have taken this logic to equate the finite stomach with the finite body and would have said that since the body wouldn't last either, they could satisfy their sexual desires however, and with whomever, they wanted.
- Here's where Paul pushes back. He responds to their first statement by saying that "not all things are helpful" for the body of Christ, or not all bring the body together. Even though he is free in Christ, he won't be dominated by anything. In v.13, he says that the human body is *not* for sexual immorality, but it is *for the Lord, and the Lord for the body*. In other words, the body matters. It isn't something to transcend out of in spirit or to indulge like an empty stomach, it's meant for a person, it's meant for the Lord.
- This is tied to our nature and purpose as people made in God's image. In v.16, Paul quotes Gen. 2 and first marriage between the first man and woman – "the two will become one flesh." In Genesis 1-2, God makes Adam and Eve after his image to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, and in doing this, to show his character to the world. He also makes them for each other to live in delight of him and one another. When Adam meets Eve, he says *"at last! This is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh"* Gen. 2:25 says *"And the man and his wife were both naked and not ashamed."* According to God's original design, the human body is of incredible value, and sex is a life-uniting act that is a gift from God to be enjoyed in marriage. In all of this, he intended for his image bearers too bring him glory by pointing people to Him. Since Adam and Eve rebelled against God in Gen. 3, these good gifts from God that were meant for life and joy have been co-opted and sometimes completely taken over by sin for treachery, evil, and death. Some of us have been on the receiving end of this treachery, and believe me when I say that this is something that breaks our heavenly Father's heart.
- The amazing thing is that even after the Fall, the goodness of the body, marriage, and sexuality remain – we see this in Song of Songs, the call in Prov. 5 to delight in the wife of your youth, and in Jesus quoting Gen. 2 in Mt. 19. Our bodies are for the Lord, and sexual immorality – that is, any sexual expression outside of a marriage between a man and a woman – directly violates our embodied image-bearing purpose, because it is the wrong *kind* of life-uniting act. It's a perversion of a great gift from God to us. I think this is why v.18

says that sexual immorality is against the body and other sins are outside the body (though, of course, other sins like drug abuse are certainly against our bodies as well).³

III: I mentioned Trueman's book earlier and how our culture emphasizes individual self-expression and fulfilling "my sexuality". Compared with God's perspective, this emphasis is quite limited. It misses both a) how we are embodied image bearers of God *and* b) the life-uniting nature of sex as the Bible presents it. Sex isn't the way to personal happiness, it's a gift from God for a covenant relationship. Losing this view leads to major problems like our gender confusion, homosexuality, and widespread sex and cohabitation outside of marriage.

App: God says that sexual sins and desires for sexual sin aren't neutral – they're a perversion of something that is good, and they can have great power over us. Think about pornography – it's the epitome of turning sex into a commodity for individual and impersonal consumption. I believe the devil is using pornography to capitalize on our cultural and technological moment to make sin spread like a cancer in the world today. In some age groups, over 60% of people use it, and the church isn't exempt from this. I share this because I think that our battle is not just with outward behavior, but with entertaining our desires for sexual sin and with continuing in sinful patterns – especially secret ones. These desires come from our sinful nature, and our influenced by our culture, also from us being sinned against, but their origin doesn't change the fact that our Lord calls us to constant vigilance of our eyes and our hearts.. for that passing glance, for that misplaced longing. Jesus tells us that it is better to tear out our eyes than to have our whole bodies be thrown into hell. And this starts with what Paul says in our passage: "*flee sexual immorality!*" It should be like seeing a bear in the woods... you stop dead in your tracks, back away slowly until you're out of sight, and then run as fast as you can. Putting these desires and habits to death isn't an easy journey, but he'll help us in it. We need to start by naming our sin for what it is asking him to work.

- Furthermore, our culture says happiness comes from sexual encounter and expression, but as God says in Psalm 1, real happiness comes from delighting in His Law and meditating on his Word. In other words, happiness comes from an ethical standard that exists outside of us and is objectively good. True happiness comes from loving Him with our heart, soul, mind, and strength (i.e. our bodies).. in walking humbly before our heavenly Father and enjoying what He gives us each day – in work, play, and all of life. *This* happiness is possible by his grace and his Spirit's work

Transition: Let's go to our text for the 2nd reason we're to flee sexual immorality and pursue bodily purity.

Reason 2: Our bodies are knit to Jesus Christ, our risen Savior (v.13b-20)

- In v.13, Paul says the body is for the Lord, and instead of him destroying it like the stomach, he says in v.14 that since God raised the Lord, he will raise us (bodies included) by his power. In other words, our bodies are knit spiritually to our risen Lord, and because He

³ Withrington, *A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1&2 Corinthians*, 169.

reigns now in heaven, our bodies will be physically raised on the last day. The resurrection is central to Christianity – it always has been. The early Christian creed of 1 Cor. 15:3-4 shows this – *Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, he was buried, and he was raised in accordance with the Scriptures*. And Paul is saying here that since that our bodies were purchased by Christ and He lives in us through his Spirit, it matters what we do now. Yes, we look forward to eternal life in his presence, but as Gordon Fee says, our salvation in Christ is embodied *now*.⁴

- We see this in WSC 37, which tells us the benefits we receive from Christ at death. It says: *“The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves until the resurrection.”* This is true in death physical death, and it will certainly be true for believers in the Resurrection.
- Since Christ’s work has made us new creations and knit us to the resurrection, we should flee sexual immorality and pursue bodily purity. Look in V.15-20. They have 3 “do you not know” questions, which provide 3 reasons for this:
 - V.15 – we’re members of Christ’s body. The metaphor is of being attached to him like an arm to a shoulder, and joining one’s body to a prostitute is a direct contradiction of this.
 - V.16-18 – Christ lives in us through his Spirit; we are joined to him. So, having sex & joining life with a prostitute is a direct violation of the spiritual bond that we have with the living God in Christ.⁵
 - V.19-20 – Paul takes the image from 3:16-17 of the corporate church as God’s temple and he says that the bodies of individual believers are temples for the Holy Spirit.. He says “we are not our own, we were bought with a price.” This price was the life of Jesus, the Son of Man who came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mt. 20:28), to buy us back to God.
- In all of this, Paul says “your body is for the Lord, He lives in you. Use your body to glorify him.”

III: In St. Louis, there is an incredible basilica cathedral with giant internal domes and intricate mosaics that tell the biblical story. Every time I went to this cathedral, I was immediately filled with awe, reverence, and a level of restraint. I wasn’t going to play around in there like I would 100 meters away on the sidewalk. For me, this wasn’t about the building itself, but it was because I knew the building and all the work that went into it was meant for a sacred purpose – to point us upward, to point us to God. You could say the same about our church – what’s at the center? The cross. We enter into places like this with respect and awe.. we take good care of them.. not because they’re about us, but because they’re for someone much greater than us:

⁴ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 294.

⁵ Withrington, 168-169.

God. **Transition:** Paul uses this exact metaphor so we view our bodies as Temples for God, because that is what they are. And that's what we are, not because of what we have done, but because he bought us by giving his body and blood.

App: In Him, we are not our own. This should change everything. It should bring us from saying "my body my choice" to saying, "my body is a Temple, and I am a steward of this Temple, saved and made new to point people to Him." This impacts our entire lives, but for our purposes today, it should change how we should think about sexual purity. Because we are God's Temples and stewards of our bodies, we should see sexual sin as a violation, not just of another person and ourselves (which I could certainly say more about), but of our union with Christ and what God has made us to be in Him. In giving ourselves to sexual immorality, we're disregarding the union we have with Christ. This makes it a treacherous road to walk down, both spiritually and physically.

- Sexual sin is dangerous and powerful, and it can crush us in guilt and shame. But here's the good news: it's not unpardonable. Westminster Confession of Faith ch. 15 says "there is no sin so great that it cannot bring damnation on those who repent." Don't let your guilt and shame make you freeze up and keep you from repenting. Just confess it and turn. As the Psalmist says, "with you, O Lord, there is forgiveness, that you may be feared" If we have repented from our sins and trusted in Christ, we're no longer condemned, b/c He gives us his righteousness and God forgives us. All we have to do is repent. He became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God.

MP3: How do we pursue this purity? By clinging to Christ as His body (v.14-20)

- This is essential for us to grasp. B/c as soon as we hear a word like purity, we can quickly put it on ourselves as if it's something we do, and certainly, we need to flee from temptation and sexual immorality, to gouge out the eye that makes us sin. But this isn't where these things start. The pursuit of bodily purity comes out of two facts: we're not our own, and we're not alone.
 - o We're not our own: Christ has died for us to buy us back to God once and for all. In Him, our bodies are Temples for the Lord.. we're redeemed/bought back to be slaves, not of our own passions, but of righteousness – of living out his good ways.
 - o And here's the second fact: we're not alone. John Calvin wrote the whole 3rd book of his Institutes on the way we receive the grace of Christ by the Spirit. I don't think we spend enough time considering and soaking in this and our union with Christ. But why not? Well, it's hard to wrap our minds and hearts around.. we're distracted by life and allured by sin. He's living in heaven, He sometimes he seems far off, but he's with us. And I think we need to grow in our awareness of his presence. The WLC speaks of our union with Christ in this way: "The union which the elect have with Christ is the work of God's grace, whereby they are spiritually and mystically, yet really and inseparably, joined to Christ as their head and husband." Did you hear

that? this union is a work of his grace. V.17 of our passage – we’re *one spirit* with the Lord by his grace.

- And this is how he makes us pure – through dwelling in us through his Spirit and through us clinging to him, he helps us kill sin and grow in righteousness. Theologians have called his double grace – that is, his double grace in both justification and sanctification – “the sum of the gospel”. The gospel is salvation accomplished *and* salvation embodied.
- This is secondary, but important.. We’re also not alone b/c he has given us each other in the body. We’re Christ’s body together – so we need to do this together. In a way, this is what Paul is doing here. We’re to hold one another up in honoring him with our bodies – we need to reach out and let others into our sin struggle, to be willing, trustworthy, and faithful friends to those who do this w/us, and to gently challenge each other when we see each other in sin

III: This isn’t an easy battle, but we’re not alone. Here’s John Calvin: *if you contemplate yourself, that is sure damnation. But since Christ has been so imparted to you with all his benefits that all his things are made yours, that you are made a member of him, indeed one with him, his righteousness overwhelms your sins; his salvation wipes out your condemnation; with his worthiness he intercedes that your unworthiness may not come before God’s sight. Surely this is so: We ought not to separate Christ from ourselves or ourselves from him. Rather we ought to hold fast bravely with both hands to that fellowship by which he has bound himself to us. So the apostle teaches us: “Now your body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit of Christ which dwells in you is life because of righteousness (Rom. 8:10)”*⁶

Conclude: When you face dark temptation and feel hopeless, He’s with you. He went through great temptation and suffering to buy us back to God, and his Spirit works life in you. Because of this, we can see our temptations not as ten foot waves to crashing on us while we sit alone on the beach, but as storms to go through with Him.. because of his grace, we can say “Jesus, this is hard, but I know you’re with me. Help me turn from this and turn to you.” Over time, He’ll bring us to say, “Jesus, work in my soul and body today so I embody your righteousness, so I embody you. Help me to use my body in all of life to bring you praise.”

- By his grace, he wants to move us away from thinking about what we *can’t do* in our bodies to what we *can do* for Him and his kingdom. We’ll have moments of weakness where we think we’re still living in bodies of death, and in part, we still are, but we can take heart in these moments that He has delivered us, that we live in union with Him right now, and that He will raise our bodies. Let’s live for that day, Amen?

Pray we are not our own, for you bought us with your body and blood. By your mercy, help us to offer our souls and to you completely (Rom. 12), and bodies work in your Spirit as we flee sin.

⁶ John Calvin, [*Institutes of the Christian Religion & 2*](#), ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 1, The Library of Christian Classics (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 570. (3.2.24 in Billings, 65)