

# Your Body is a Temple

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[ 0 : 00 ] Our reading this morning is from 1 Corinthians, chapter 6, verse 12 to 20, which is found on the church Bible, page 1148. 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. 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. By his power, God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.

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.

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. But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

[ 1 : 13 ] Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually sins against their own body.

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, honour God with your bodies. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Thanks, Joanne, for reading.

If you could keep your Bibles open at page 1148, 1 Corinthians chapter 6, that would be a great help as we look at that together. And you can find an outline inside the notice sheet, if you'd find that helpful, just to see what points we're looking at as we dig into God's Word here.

We're in this sermon series looking at this book, 1 Corinthians, a letter written by an early church leader, Paul, to a church that he planted in Corinth. And if you're here as a guest, you'll already have seen that there's some very challenging, counter-cultural teaching in the letter.

[ 2 : 25 ] But we're committed as a church to working through books like this of the Bible, chapter by chapter, so that we let God set the agenda and we hear his voice as we turn to his Word.

So let's pray now and let's ask for God's help. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us and we are his. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of your Word.

We ask that you will open your Word to our hearts this morning and open our hearts to your Word. For we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

So this morning we're thinking about sex. The Bible is God's Word that makes sense of God's world. It's a real-life book. And so it should be no surprise to us that it has things to say about sex and about sexuality.

God cares about our sex lives because he cares about us. And we're concerned about sex. And so God is. We're going to see in the next couple of weeks that as we get into the next chapter as well, that looking together at God's teaching, God's design for sex is a very positive one.

[ 3 : 37 ] For us today, of course, we know that living for Jesus when it comes to our bodies and our sex lives is very countercultural in Glasgow today.

I remember, if you're here as a guest and you think this is weird, I remember what that's like. I remember looking into the Christian faith myself as a young adult and it was the views about sex that seemed to me the most bizarre.

And today I guess some people would also say that they're wrong, they're dangerous. But if we feel aware of how strange or weird these views, these values are to the world around us today, we're actually in really good company when it comes to the first hearers of this letter in Corinth.

Jesus' teaching about sex was much more radical in the first century Roman Empire than it is today. And Corinth that he was writing to was a prosperous, cosmopolitan place.

It was pluralistic and it was promiscuous. People would have moved to Corinth for sexual liberation. You'd have either said it was sexually liberated or that it was seedy as a city.

[ 4 : 53 ] Or you might have thought it was both of those things. And Paul is writing to the church because it was a worldly church. It was the church, they were baby Christians. He's described them earlier in the letter as immature.

They'd put their trust in Jesus, but they were still thinking in a worldly way about lots of things. And one of those areas was the area of their bodies and sex. We see their confusion about bodies and sex from the quotes that Paul gives us of the things the church in Corinth were saying in verse 12. Can you see there's that bit in quotation marks in verse 12 and in verse 13? So that's our first point here. It's that they were asking the wrong questions. So just have a look at verse 12.

I have the right to do anything you say. You can actually imagine that the Apostle Paul might have said that in a different context. You have the right to do anything.

For when we come to put our trust in Jesus, he liberates us from a host of things. If you come to Jesus from a pagan background, you have the right not to be superstitious anymore.

[ 6 : 04 ] You don't have to say, touch wood, when you say that something's going well. Well, you're free from that. You're free not to observe certain holy festivals if you don't want to do that.

You enjoy freedom from the Old Testament food laws. If you'd come to follow Jesus from a Jewish background, you had the right to eat whatever you wanted because Jesus had declared foods clean.

So there are senses in which we have the right to do things as a Christian. So are we to say of our bodies, I have the right to do anything? Well, Paul urges them to ask two different questions in verse 12.

First, is this beneficial for me? Not everything is beneficial. Lots of things we do with our bodies, we do for fleeting pleasure. It would be very different to ask, is this actually a beneficial thing for me to be doing?

If you just think about watching late night TV or surfing the internet late at night on your own, it's one thing to ask, am I breaking any rules here? Do I have the right to do this?

[ 7 : 09 ] But it's better to ask, is this actually beneficial for me to be doing this? Would it be more beneficial for me just to go to bed and stop looking?

And then Paul repeats their phrase in verse 12, I have the right to do anything, but he adds, but I will not be mastered by anything. In other words, he's getting us to ask the question, will this start to control me?

And one of the problems with sexual behavior is that it can be enslaving. We can become enslaved. It masters us as our bodies get hooked on certain feelings and habits.

The writer Al Stewart talks about what goes on if you watch internet pornography. And he says sometimes people think, I'll watch pornography, it's like a sugar hit. And he says it's not a sugar hit, it's a dopamine hit.

When somebody watches pornography, dopamine is the hormone that stimulates your brain to give you pleasure. And images in pornography can cause your body to produce dopamine in a similar way to the way people get high on illegal drugs.

[ 8 : 17 ] But what your body then does is that it adapts to that shot of dopamine by reducing your sensitivity to it. And that's what creates the addiction because you become desensitized.

And as people find themselves not getting the same pleasure from what they looked at before, they get drawn into looking at more extreme pornography or going into chat rooms and engaging with people or meeting people physically because they're not getting the pleasure hit that they got before from the images they looked at.

And in the rest of life, because your brain has become desensitized, things just become bland. And life just kind of greys out.

And the things God gave us to enjoy in life, the enjoyment of them just gets diminished. It's poisonous pornography. And it looks free. It looks like it's free to use.

It's not free for the women who get trafficked to Europe by the sex industry and enslaved and filmed. But it's also not free for the user because it diminishes your whole life.

[ 9 : 24 ] You get mastered by it. It's just one example of how sexual sin can enslave us. The world says, you're in control. It's your body. Shake off the constraints.

Enjoy your freedom. And the Bible says, you'll be mastered by it. Don't be mastered. Don't get hooked. So that's the first saying they were getting wrong in Corinth.

The second one comes in verse 13. You say, food for the stomach and the stomach for food and God will destroy them both. And this is very contemporary.

Notice three wrong terms in that phrase. The first is the idea that sex is just an appetite like food for the body. You see, that's what they're saying. That in the same way that you, when your stomach is hungry, you use food.

That's how the body craves sex and you should think of sex like that. You know, and it's so contemporary, isn't it? That if I'm feeling hungry on a Saturday night, there's an app for that.

[10:24] I can open Just Eat or Uber Eats on my phone. I can swipe my way through different options. I can look at the photos. I can order takeaway and it can arrive at my door within an hour.

And if you're feeling hungry for sex on a Saturday night, there are apps for that as well. Apps that are part of a hookup culture that says, it's your body, it's your appetite.

And if you want to find someone else for casual sex, swipe your way through the options and find someone you like. No commitment, just sexual food for your sexual hunger.

It's like mutual prostitution without the money. So is sex just an appetite? Food for the stomach, the stomach for food. So that's the first wrong turn they make in that phrase.

The second wrong turn behind that phrase is that there's no future for your body. Do you see that? It says, God will destroy them both. In other words, make the most of your body because one day you're going to die and that will be the end of your body.

[11:24] There's nothing particularly spiritual about your body or eternal. And the third wrong turn in that phrase that they were making in Corinth is the idea that your body is essentially bad.

The soul is good and the body is bad. And we hear that all around us today. Don't get hung up on the morality about your body because it's not the real you. The real you is deep inside you.

Don't we see that today? That there's a real you inside you that's not your body? People believe it so strongly that they would go as far as to say if the real you inside you is different to the physical body you're in then don't change how you feel.

Change your body. We see that with gender ideology, don't we? That the world says your chromosomes and your physical organs might be male but if the real you inside you says that you're female, we need to change your body to match what the real you inside you feels.

Soul is good, inner life is good, body is bad. So three wrong turns in that phrase in verse 13. Sex is just an appetite. Your body has no future. Your body is not your true self.

[12:38] So what does God say? That's where we turn next. So our first point this morning is your body matters to Jesus. Have a look with me at verse 13. Again, 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. God made this world physical. He made us physical and our bodies are an essential part of who we are.

He calls us to serve him with our bodies. When we come to know God and he liberates us, he calls us to serve him with all of our lives including our bodies.

So instead of offering our bodies to sexual immorality, we offer them to a different master now, to the Lord Jesus. When we use our bodies in the ways he designed them to be used, we give him glory.

In other words, what we do with our bodies really matters to God. And we're seeing all around us in our world that that's true, that we know that's true, that you can't just treat sex as an appetite, a physical appetite.

[13:48] So it's some years ago now that the Bloodhound Gang had their song where they sang, You and Me Baby Ain't Nothing But Mammals, So Let's Do It Like They Do on the Discovery Channel. But the reality is, there's lots of parts of our lives where if someone was behaving in a certain way, we'd say, Stop behaving like an animal.

We know we're not animals. We say, Stop behaving like an animal. God designed sex so that it gives us a psychological, physical, and emotional connection with another person.

And the ways that our society has now seen that so profoundly in recent years is very sadly with the negative example of sexual abuse.

And I know that is painful. It evokes pain for lots of us to think about it. But it's good to see that God shows us why this is painful. In the Me Too movement, as millions of women and men as well spoke out to say that they'd been sexually abused or sexually assaulted, people all around us were recognizing that what we do with our bodies physically and what other people do to our bodies really matters.

As the writer, the Christian writer Glenn Scrivener put it, he said, The pain of a sexual assault is not the pain of a grazed knee. It's more like the trauma of a holy place being desecrated.

[ 15 : 07 ] It shows us that our bodies are an intrinsic part of who we are. And the world around us knows that now. But we're not sure why that is.

And God shows us why that is. It's because God made us physical beings so that we'd offer the whole of ourselves to Him and our bodies matter to Him.

And not just for now, he says here in verse 14, he says our bodies have a great future. So have a look at verse 14. By His power, God raised the Lord from the dead and He will raise us also.

So sometimes, even in the Christian faith, we get drawn into this idea that paradise is this kind of floaty place where we're going to be a bit ghost-like and go and be with God after we die.

I hope that I never get to heaven. I hope I never get to heaven. Heaven is the place that someone's soul goes when they die. It's a place of joy.

[ 16 : 09 ] It's free from any pain. But the Bible says heaven is just a waiting room. God made this world physical and one day Jesus will appear in glory and He's going to destroy evil and He's going to put this world right.

And some of us will be alive when that happens. We won't have had to go to heaven. And all God's people, those who've died in Christ and those who are waiting for Christ will be given resurrection bodies on that day and we'll serve God in physical bodies forever.

And to demonstrate that that's our future we have a past event to show it, verse 14, that God really did raise Jesus from the dead. He was definitely dead.

The tomb was definitely empty. He was definitely seen. And it demonstrates to us that our eternal future is an embodied one, a physical one. I take it that our bodies will be transformed but there'll be some continuity.

Later in the letter, in chapter 15, Paul uses the analogy of like a seed that falls to the ground and the plant that grows from it. There's going to be some continuity just as there was with Jesus' body and His resurrection body.

[ 17 : 22 ] And wonderfully though, we can have every confidence that God has the power to redeem our bodies as He transforms them so that any pain we might feel now about our sexual past with our bodies, that will be lifted from us if we're following Jesus because the future will be like the Garden of Eden again in the sense that we won't feel any shame anymore.

For now though, we see that first point, your body matters to Jesus. And just as our future, embodied, has implications for what we do with our bodies now, so does our relationship with Jesus today.

So that's our second point. Your body is united to Jesus. Your body is united to Jesus. Just have a look with me at verse 15. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ Himself?

So when we come to put our trust in Jesus, we're brought into a union with Him and that includes our bodies. In verse 17, He talks about it being a spiritual union.

So He's not saying that kind of physically our body belongs to Jesus, but spiritually it does. It's a bit like when someone gets married, they formed a union where in one sense their bodies now belong to one another.

[ 18 : 40 ] So if a married person then has sex with somebody else they're not married to, in a sense, they've taken what belongs to their spouse and they've united it with the person they've slept with.

And our union with Jesus is like that. If we give our body to someone else in sexual sin, we're taking what belongs to Jesus now and is united to Him and we're joining it to another.

Now key to that idea is understanding what sex is for. And Paul points us back in verse 16 to God's first design for sex. For it is said the two will become one flesh.

It's talking there about when God created marriage, the union of marriage, and the relational intimacy there and sex is this deep expression of that intimacy between a husband and a wife.

It means that sex is an act of whole life entrustment and self-giving. It's God's appointed way for two people to say to each other I love you, I'm committed to you for life and I belong completely, exclusively, and permanently to you.

[ 19 : 55 ] And Paul is saying in verse 16 that that intimacy about sex in the way God designed it means there can be no such thing as casual sex. That if we have sex with someone, if we have sex with a prostitute, we're giving something of ourselves to them.

So when we're trusting Jesus, we're united with him and when we sin sexually by any sexual activity outside marriage, we're misusing, we're kind of drawing him into that misuse of our bodies. He takes the idea further in verse 19 as he says that God is dwelling in our bodies. If you have a look at 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?

Now the temple was the place that God called his home in the world. It was the building where God dwelt among his people. It was a place where you had to take the greatest care to do everything God's way because it was his special house.

It was a holy place. And now the dwelling place of God is his people. Any of us who trust Jesus, his spirit has come to dwell in us, empowering us to know him and live for him.

[ 21 : 13 ] So I don't know whether you've had this experience but sometimes I spend time with people who are not Christians who have this strange sense that they should behave better because they're in a church building. So we have it sometimes when we've got builders in the building and they're talking to me about it and then they drop something and they swear and then they go, oh, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said that here.

Or you're with friends looking around a cathedral on holiday and again, they swear and they say, oh, I shouldn't have done that in here. There's this sense of this is God's house and I need to behave better because it's God's place.

And the Bible is saying here that the principle is right, it's just the address is wrong. And actually, we should hold that principle about our bodies because they are God's home.

But the world urges us, it's your body. Nobody has the right to tell you what to do with it. So that's our third point. It's your body was bought by Jesus. So he goes on in verse 19 if you have a look. You are not your own, you were bought at a price. It's the language of the slave market. God saw us enslaved to sin and he has paid the ransom price to buy our freedom.

[ 22 : 24 ] And he does that not so that we're slaves of him but that he can call us his children and belong in his family. So the world says your body is yours, do what you want with it.

Don't let anyone else tell you what to do. But you'll be mastered by that, by what you do with your body. Jesus says your body doesn't belong to you, it belongs to me.

And that is liberating because of who he is. It's good news because he is good. And we know he's good because of the price at which he was willing to buy us.

What a price it was that the eternal son was not willing simply to condescend to become a human but he became a man who would endure the cross so that he could be treated at the cross in his sin-bearing death as sexually immoral, as guilty of all the sexual sins we've ever committed so that we could be set free by him from our slavery.

And that means that our bodies now are only on loan to us. They belong to him. When I was at university I needed a bike so I went to a police giveaway.

[ 23 : 36 ] They had bikes they'd found that had been nicked and some of them were so bad they were just giving them away. And I picked up a bike nobody else wanted, it was completely knackered and I cycled around on it, I lent it to other people, eventually it wore out, it wasn't worth fixing.

Last year Kathy and I went to a wedding and to get to the wedding a relative of ours lent us a Mercedes sports car. V8 engine, convertible, it was beautiful.

Immaculate. So we drove from the wedding service where I was giving the sermon at the wedding to the reception where people had already arrived and we pulled up in this Mercedes sports car and one of the guests I learnt later was a former car mechanic who's now a church minister in London and he came up to me as we walked into the building as he'd watched us we parked the car open mouth and he said how much do they pay church ministers in Scotland?

But it was just a loan, the car and I tell you what I was very careful in how I drove it. No risks were taken with the Merc. The Bible says that our bodies now they're much more like that Mercedes than

they are that old bike that I picked up at uni.

They are precious to Jesus they belong to him he bought them at great price and they're on loan to us. Our bodies matter to him they have a great future with him they're united with him now and he bought them at a price.

[ 25 : 12 ] And so Paul gives us two points of application the first comes in verse 18 he says flee from sexual immorality he reminds us that it's harmful to us that it's a sin against your own body in verse 18 so that when you know there's opportunity for sexual sin or temptation he says flee get out take radical action and get away from it.

We want to flirt with temptation we ask questions like how far can I go or is this breaking the rules yet? God says don't flirt flee flee temptation and let me encourage you to ask yourself what would that look like for me to flee sexual immorality?

For some of us maybe that will involve clear boundaries with a boyfriend or girlfriend or coming off social media or not having a smartphone or having accountability software for others maybe we're married and we need to put better boundaries in with another friendship we have or a relationship a colleague a neighbour so that emotional intimacy doesn't grow with them for any of us one way to flee sexual immorality is good accountability with a friend just honest accountability finding a prayer triplet two friends who you meet regularly with whom you could genuinely say these are my honest areas of sexual temptation and you know they'll pray for you that's the negative side of the application the positive is at the end of verse 20 he says you were bought at a price therefore honour God with your bodies so being a

Christian is not just about what we don't do what we say no to it's about what we do with our bodies as we look to honour God with them I guess we're feeling a number of things this morning and I wonder if one or two of us here would be feeling scared because we come to church knowing that we've got ourselves into a pattern of life or a relationship that we know deep down needs to change and the idea of that kind of change in our lives in this area might feel scary a step into the unknown and I think if we feel like that about being a follower of Jesus we need to go back to the question of who is he who do we really think Jesus is he made us he loves us he knows us he is kind we really can trust him and he honors our decisions to put things right for him and for all of us as we finish let's remember that none of us can boast that we've got this right

Paul has already pointed out in this letter 1 Corinthians that when we come to God none of us can boast in how we've lived and that's good news in the sense that it means that no one is excluded from the offer of being made right with God last time we were in 1 Corinthians the beginning of chapter 6 we heard that Paul lists behaviors that put us on the outside of God's people and he included sexual impurity greed slander drunkenness but then he said chapter 6 verse 10 but you were washed you were sanctified you were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the spirit of God God sees the mess that we've made in our lives and he offers us Christ to take hold of so that we can say with confidence here in Jesus in his magnificent life and death here is my righteousness and my holiness and my redemption and clothed in him we can be sure that

[ 29 : 12 ] God looks at us and says however someone else might judge you if they heard what you've done to me you really are clean let's pray together so Lord Jesus we thank you for the bright hope of a resurrection future where our bodies are put right and we can serve you wholly with them and there will be no shame by your spirit would you give us the faith the conviction and the courage to be godly with our bodies help us to flee sexual immorality and to honour you with our bodies we pray this for our good and for your glory amen no shame and try to see you before asking to fan and this for the resources