

1 Cor 6:12-20
Song of Songs 1
Psalm 63

“Resurrection and the Body”

April 13, 2014

This summer, in the evening service, I plan to preach through Song of Songs
“Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.”

Paul will say in 1 Corinthians 6
that the body is not for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

If we take Paul seriously, then we need to say that all the imagery in Song of Songs
is designed to show us Christ.

Song of Songs certainly celebrates the love between a man and a woman in passionate language,
and that bodily delight should not be “spiritualized”
in the sense of removing it from the body.
Rather, we need to learn to long for God *bodily*.

Our Psalm of response, Psalm 63 does this.

“O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you;
my soul thirsts for you;
my flesh faints for you,
as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.”

David expresses his longing for God in *physical* terms.
Body and soul, I want you, O God!

Your body is for Jesus.

Sing Psalm 63
Read 1 Corinthians 6

“All things are lawful for me.”

Paul is probably quoting the Corinthians’ letter
(that’s why the ESV uses quotation marks).

The Corinthians appear to be trying to defend their sexual and economic practices
by appealing to the Pauline principle that we are “free” from the law of Moses.

If we are free from the law of Moses, then all things are lawful!
Right?

Now, the phrase “all things are lawful” needs a word of explanation.
It might be better to say “all things are permitted” or “allowed.”
The idea is “I can do whatever I want”!

The reason why I bring up the translation is because the last statement in verse 12

uses a closely related word.

“All things are lawful for me” but I will not be dominated by anything.

Paul is using a word play between these two words “lawful” and “dominated.”

The best I can do in English is to say,

“I have power to do anything, but I will not be overpowered by anything.”

Or to capture another nuance of the Greek,

“Liberty to do anything – but I will not let anything take liberties with me.”

[Thiselton, 461]

After all, while we *are* sons of God in Jesus Christ –

we are *free* from the guilt and the power of sin! –

and so, yes, in one sense, “I can do whatever I want”!

But *not everything is helpful*.

Not everything moves you in the direction that you want to go.

Think back to 2:15 –

“The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one.”

That sounds an awful lot like the Corinthians – “all things are lawful!”

But as Paul had said in 2:16,

“For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?

But we have the mind of Christ.”

If you have the mind of Christ, then you can do whatever you want!

Because what you want is driven by Christ’s own loves!

If we love God – and if we love those who are created in God’s image –

then we will prefer *love* to our own “right to do whatever we want”!

But if you are fixated on your “right” to do whatever you want,

then you are dominated by something other than Christ –

you are still under the dominion of sin!

1. What Is the Body For? (v12-14)

¹² *“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything.* ¹³ *“Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food”—and God will destroy both one and the other.*

In verse 13, Paul again quotes the Corinthians:

“Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food.”

Possibly the next line is as well, “and God will destroy both one and the other.”

The Corinthians appear to be saying that what we do in the body isn’t all that important, because God will destroy both the stomach and food.

Paul agrees that God will destroy both –

just like Paul agrees that food is for the stomach, and the stomach for food.

There is *design* in the universe.
God has ordered all things towards their proper *end*.
Food is *for* digestion.

Children, you know this, right?
What is food for?
The purpose – the proper end – of food is for eating.
Do you throw your food on the floor?
No!
If your Mother tells you to eat it, do you give it to the dog?
No!

My friend had a cow named Ribeye.
If he had wanted a milk cow, he might have called her Betsy,
but he wasn't going to call this cow by a pet name,
because he wanted his family to understand that the *purpose* of this cow
was to wind up on the supper table.

And what is your stomach for?
Your stomach is for food.
God gave you a stomach so that you might be able to digest food.

But God will destroy them both.

The Corinthians respond by saying, “Then what I do with my body doesn't matter.”
Paul responds to this by saying, “Whoa!”
What you do with your body *does* matter!

*The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.*¹⁴ *And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.*

Verse 14 explains Paul's basic doctrine of the resurrection.
God raised the Lord Jesus (simple past tense),
and he *will* also raise us up by his power (simple future).
But if that's all you say – God raised Jesus, so he will raise us –
then haven't quite understood what Paul is saying.

Why will God raise us?

This is why we have to pay attention to the end of verse 13.
“The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord,
and the Lord for the body.”

We hear that food is for the stomach and the stomach for food –
and so we want to say that likewise,
the body is for sex, and sex for the body!

Paul says “No, that’s not true.”

If you say that the body is for sex, and sex for the body,
then you are, in effect, saying that the body is meant for sexual immorality.

Why do I say that?

Food is a need.

If you never eat, you will soon die.

Sex is not a need.

If you never have sex, you may still live a long and happy life.

If you say that sex is for the body and the body for sex,
then you are saying that sex is a need,
regardless of whether a person is married,
in which case you are saying that the body is for sexually immorality.

There are many in our day who would say that.

Our sex-crazed culture thinks that the body is for sex and sex for the body.

No wonder that we read Song of Songs and think that it’s just talking about sex!

Paul disagrees.

The body is not meant for sex, but for the Lord.

The purpose of your stomach is to digest food.

But the purpose of your *body* is not simply to reproduce itself (through sex),
but the purpose of the body is Jesus.

And the purpose of Jesus is the body.

Your body.

After all, where is your body going in the end?

Yes, you will die.

But that is not the end!

The end of the body is found in the resurrection.

And the Lord is for the body.

Your body belongs to him – and he belongs to your body.

Such is the union between the believer and Christ
that the two become one.

Indeed, this union of Christ and his people was the *point* of the sexual relation from the start!

Through the rest of chapter 6 and all of chapter 7, Paul will apply this principle.

What does it mean that the body is for the Lord and the Lord for the body?

if you are married?

if you are single?

if you are engaged?

2. “The Two Will Become One Flesh”: Why Union with Christ Is Better than Sex (v15-17)

For all Christians, the point is that you are bound together with Jesus.

Being “in Christ” means to be joined together with him in a greater intimacy than any sexual union.

Indeed, the sexual union itself (as created by God in the beginning) was designed as a picture and shadow of our union with Christ.

This is why I have titled point 2,

“The two will become one flesh”: why union with Christ is better than sex.

One friend asked me, “don’t you mean, that it is “even better” than sex?”

I replied, “No, because Paul does not always view sex as a *good* thing.”

Paul says in chapter 7, verse 8,

that it is a good and beautiful thing for those who are single to remain so.

Not all single people can or will do so.

But celibacy, for Paul, is just as good a thing as marriage.

It’s not that married people get to have the good thing, and singles are deprived.

Because the body is not for “sex” – the body is for the Lord.

Paul’s attitude toward sex is marvelous.

1 Corinthians 6-7 challenged the Reformers

to reject the ascetical extremes of the late Middle Ages,
and to celebrate the *good* of marriage;

but 1 Corinthians 6-7 challenges *us*

to reject the hypersexualized culture of the 21st century,
and to celebrate the *good* of singleness.

If you live in a world dominated by sex, Paul’s words should sting a little.

And if you live in a world that rejects sex, Paul’s words should sting a little!

¹⁵ *Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?*

Notice that the word “members” is used three times in verse 15.

You have been united to Christ – you are now organically connected to him.

If you think about it, the sexual act is the one human act where two bodies become one.

Paul uses an extreme example.

Prostitution.

Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶ Or do you not know that he who is joined^[d] to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, “The two will become one flesh.”

Prostitution is the sexual relation that has the least emotional intimacy of any consensual sexual act.

It’s one and done – with no expectation of a future relationship.

As such, it is the perfect illustration for what Paul wants to say here.
When God says in Genesis that “the two will become one flesh,”
that applies to any and every sexual interaction –
even the most transient and ephemeral.
If you have sex with someone, you become one flesh.

God created us male and female –
and so when male and female come together in the sexual act,
the two become one flesh
(and *sometimes* the result of that encounter is “one flesh” in the literal sense:
a baby).

[This is part of the reason why two men or two women cannot marry.
They simply cannot become one flesh.]

The coming together of male and female is *supposed* to image the union of Christ and his bride.
Sexual union is supposed to involve a self-commitment that involves the whole person.
If you try to detach the sexual act from that personal union,
then you make a mockery of the body – and of the Lord!

Now, I need to stop for a moment and address a concern that will arise here.
What if it’s too late?
You’ve already had sex with someone.
Maybe you’ve had multiple partners.
Did you become one flesh with all of them?

Yes – according to Paul, you did.

I once knew a father whose teenage daughter got pregnant.
He said that because she had become one flesh with him,
she needed to marry him.
That’s *not* what the Bible says!

If you have sinned, you don’t need to make it worse!
If you have sinned, you need to make it right!

How do you make it right when you have sinned?

You repent, and you believe the gospel!

As we saw last time –
“Such were some of you” –
some of you were sexually immoral –
some of you were homosexuals –
some of you were adulterers –
some of you were greedy –

some of you were drunkards –

“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.”

¹⁷ *But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.*

In our union with Christ – when we are joined to the Lord Jesus –
we become one spirit with him.

I’m a little miffed at the ESV for not capitalizing Spirit here –
because there is no *other* spirit that unites us!

If you think about Paul’s use of the “body of Christ” language –
Paul regularly speaks of the church as Christ’s “body” –
the body of which Christ is “head.”
Often we think of this in terms of a torso, of which Christ is head.

But I’m pretty sure that here in 1 Corinthians,
Paul is thinking of us (the church) as the body with which Christ is one.
In other words, “body” and “bride” language are intimately connected.
We are Christ’s body – his bride –
and we become one Spirit with him –
so that what God has joined together, let not man separate!

Robert Gundry says this well:

“Instead of placing the human will or soul on one side,
and food and the body on the other,
he opposes *porneia* [sexual immorality] as representative of the estranged cosmos,
and God, Jesus Christ, and believers as fully embodied beings.”
(Gundry, quoted in Thiselton, p468)

The marriage relation was established by God as something *good*.
But like all created things, its goodness points beyond itself to something better.
Adam and Eve were created as good –
but they were created in the image of God –
pointing beyond themselves to something better.
The resurrection of the body will result in that “something better” –
not the obliteration of the body,
but the glorification of the body.

For the body is not for sexual immorality, but for the Lord – and the Lord for the body!

This is why Paul says in verse 18:

3. “You Are Not Your Own” – Your Body Belongs to Jesus (v18-20)

¹⁸ *Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin^[e] a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.*

If the body is for the Lord and the Lord for the body –
then sexual immorality involves taking something that belongs to Jesus
and uniting it to that which is fundamentally hostile to Jesus.

There is no such thing as “casual sex.”
“Friends with benefits” effects a oneness of physical relationship
which contradicts the Lord’s claim over the body.

There are plenty of sins that “affect” the body:
drunkenness is followed by a hangover –
suicide has a rather permanent result!

But if you think about, *every sin* has some sort of effect on the body.
So plainly, when Paul says that “the sexually immoral person sins against his own body,”
he is not just talking about “effects.”
What makes sexual sin unique is that the sexual act is itself a *bond* that unites two people.
I’m not talking about a psychological bond.
You don’t have to feel it for it to be there.
The sexually immoral person is creating multiple bonds
that connect him to multiple people –
thereby disconnecting him more and more from Christ.

If your body is for the Lord – and the Lord for the body –
then sexual sin is nothing less than temple prostitution:

¹⁹ *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?*

Notice the Trinitarian pattern here
Members of Christ = temple of the Holy Spirit
“whom you have from God” (the Father).

What does Paul mean, “temple of the Holy Spirit”?
Think about what this would mean to a Jew.
The temple in Jerusalem is the *only* temple.
In the wilderness, God had given Moses the tabernacle –
a traveling tent where God’s presence dwelt in the midst of Israel.
At Sinai, the glory of the LORD left the mountain top,
and came and filled the Holy of Holies,
so that the Spirit of God filled the tabernacle.

But then in the days of Solomon, God gave Israel the temple –
a house of stone and gold,

and at the dedication of the temple,
the glory of the LORD filled the temple –
and the Spirit of God dwelt with his people

But then came the Exile –
and when Israel rebuilt the temple in the days of Zerubbabel,
the glory of the LORD did *not* come –
and the people wept.
But the prophet Haggai said that the glory of the latter temple
would exceed the glory of the former temple –

a prophecy that came to pass,
when the Word became flesh and dwelt among us –
and we beheld his glory –
the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father,
full of grace and truth!

And Jesus said that if they destroyed *this* temple,
he would rebuild it in three days.

Because *Jesus* is the place where the glory of the LORD filled not just stone and wood,
but in Jesus the glory of the LORD filled our flesh.
Jesus is the place where earth and heaven meet.

It's not that we don't *need* a temple anymore –
it's that we *have* a temple – a better temple – a more glorious temple!

The incarnation of the Son of God is at the heart of the Christian faith –
when the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us.
Paul has repeatedly emphasized the cross in 1 Corinthians.
Because in the cross, Jesus has “bought us” with a price.
And in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead,
and his being seated at the right hand of the Father,
God has now poured out his promised Holy Spirit,
so that we might become the temple of the Holy Spirit.

At the dedication of the tabernacle, the Spirit was poured out upon wood and cloth.
At the dedication of the temple, the Spirit was poured out upon stone and gold.
But on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit was poured out upon flesh and blood,
so that the Spirit of God might dwell among us forever!

So,
*You are not your own,*²⁰ *for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*

This is the language of slavery.
You have been purchased.

You don't belong to the powers that held you enslaved to sin and death!
(thanks be to God!)

But you don't belong to yourself either.

You belong to Jesus.

Jesus did not redeem you so that you might become your own master.
He redeemed you so that you might be *his*.

At first that may not sound all that great!
After all, we want to be free!
We don't want to be enslaved to anyone!

But God has purchased you so that you might be his.
After all, he created us for himself.

In the Great Divorce, C. S. Lewis portrays what "freedom" from God is.
It's hell.
But some people really, really want their freedom.
And so they would prefer hell to heaven.

Think back to verse 12:

All things are lawful – all things are permissible –
but not all things are helpful –
and what's more,
I will not be enslaved by anything.

I am the rightful property of the Triune God who made me –
and who now in Jesus Christ has bought me back.

Therefore, glorify God in your body.
You belong to the Lord Jesus.
You are called to be useful to him.

Or to say it another way,
My only comfort is

A. That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death,
to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.
He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood,
and has set me free from all the power of the devil.
He also preserves me in such a way that without the will of my heavenly Father
not a hair can fall from my head;
indeed, all things must work together for my salvation.
Therefore by his Holy Spirit he also assures me of eternal life
and makes me heartily willing and ready from now on to live for him.