

A Theology of the Body

Bible Verses Referenced: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, Galatians 5:22-23

Amen. So William and I are going to be starting a sermon series today through the season of Epiphany. And for our texts, we are going to be looking at the readings from 1 Corinthians. And I sometimes let William set up the preaching schedule, and so he started off by giving me the hardest one, which was really, really nice of him. Thank you, William.

But not unimportant, discussing our sexual ethics and how we ought to live our lives in this world as holy and righteous people, as Christians. One of the biggest challenges that we have in our day and age, and it's not just a challenge from our day, but it's always been for the church, is that we live in a culture that doesn't submit to God's law, that doesn't submit to God's ways.

And so, as we are trying to live for the Lord and give our lives to Him, our lives will often be countercultural. They will look very different than the way the people of this world are living. And it's made doubly challenging because of the media age in which we live, in which we are constantly bombarded with television and all kinds of other arts, and so on, that are eroding and challenging our mores and our morals.

And so, the question that we'll be wrestling with all through the season of Epiphany is really, how do we be in the world but not of it? How do we live our lives manifesting the Word made flesh? Jesus, the Christ in this world. And one of the most important things that we are to manifest is actually the Spirit in the flesh.

Just as Jesus was the Word made flesh dwelling among us, well, now we are the body of Christ, and we are to manifest His body. And that's not just in a spiritual sense, but physically in the way that we carry our bodies in this world. And so what we're really talking about today is a theology of the body. So, the bottom line of this particular section, if you look in your bulletin, it's 1 Corinthians chapter 6 or in your Bible, 1 Corinthians 6:12 through 20.

And Paul is challenging a mentality of that day in the Corinthian church that is not unlike the attitude in our day. And I'm not just singling out St. Mark's. I don't know you well enough to do that, but the culture of our day. All things are lawful for me. That's in quotations because that's a saying that was being uttered by the Corinthian church members.

Well, I can do it because it's legal or because I have a right to or because I have freedom in Christ or however they were thinking about it, but basically what they were saying is, I can do whatever I want. That attitude is very much akin to the culture in which we live, which is promoting an autonomous way of looking itself. That the most important thing for any of us this is the lie of our culture.

The most important thing for any of us to come to grip with is what I want for me and to live that and manifest that. And if people don't like it, well, they need to affirm the way I look at things and the way I am. And so everybody else has to conform their approval and their blessing and their acceptance of you or me.

I had a friend of mine, this was a while ago, whose father had died, and he says, "Yeah, my dad was really self-centered." And no lie, we didn't do his funeral at a church, but I was asked to come and help out with his funeral. It was in a funeral home. But they played that song, "I Did It My Way." After that experience, I realized that is the theme song of hell.

And we used to tease my friend and I that you can either do things your way or you can do things God's way. And that's what Paul is really driving at through 1 Corinthians. All things are lawful for me, but that doesn't necessarily mean that all things are beneficial for me. Just because I have a right to do it, or a legality to do it, or I'm free to do it, because I want to do it, doesn't mean it's good.

I was in a restaurant meeting up with one of my another friend again a while ago, but he was sharing with me that he was about to move in with his girlfriend, and that they were going to get a house

together. And he said, "What do you think of that, Charlie?" And I said, "That's not a good idea." Now, that is a very typical idea.

I can't tell you that most of the couples that I do weddings for have already started living together as if they were married, and they're cohabitating. And so this is what I shared with my friend. I said, it's a really bad idea. It's not good for you, and it's not good for her.

Because what you're doing is essentially you're bringing all of the aspects of a marriage, which is, you know, physical intimacy, you're co-joining your assets, and all kinds of things, all things that are protected by the covenant of marriage, and yet you haven't been willing to make the actual commitments of that covenant, which is putting you and her in a very dangerous place.

I mean, for one, what if it turns out that it doesn't work out, and the woman that you have done all this joining with of becoming one flesh and one in finances, and one in home, and it turns out she's not the person that you want to marry. And then she, later on, marries your best friend or some other guy that you know. How is that going to go? Well, I didn't really think about that.

And what are you saying about your marriage vows if you are saying, well, they're not that important? Even if you end up marrying the person, you have put important value statements about the importance of your vows. And so I was pretty strong with my friend, and I wasn't sure if I had a friend anymore.

And I went to the, met with him again, and he said, "You know, I didn't like anything that you said." I said, "I kind of had a feeling." And he goes, "You were absolutely right, and I didn't do it. I didn't move in with her." It wasn't but like seven or eight months later. Different day, same guy, but a different woman.

And he says, "Charlie, I've met the woman of my dreams, and we are going to do it God's way." And he ended up marrying her, and it was a beautiful wedding, a beautiful marriage. And to this day, they have an incredibly strong relationship. And he thanked me, actually, for speaking hard truths into his life. You know, we live in a culture that doesn't want to do things God's way.

And we need to be mindful of that. But Paul gives us a really great theology here. And part of the temptation of church members, church leaders, is, you know, you want people in authority to justify your way of doing things. But that actually is not being truthful or honest with you.

And so, part of my responsibility, and our responsibility as the body of Christ, is a type of accountability towards living our lives unto God. And so, the theology that Paul says is, "Do you not know that the body is not meant for fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." So, really, two theological principles here that will work wonders in the way that you think about yourself, your body, and your ethics in this world.

The first is, is that the body is meant for the Lord. That your body, when you are baptized into Jesus Christ, belongs to Jesus. It is His body. And so, not only do you have to ask yourself, "Well, what's good for me?" But you also have to ask yourself, "Well, what is good for Christ's body? What's good for the edification of the body?" And we just had about a million kids come out of here.

And it's hard to have these kind of conversations when there's children around, but I will tell you that they're watching us always. I was standing back there and our young choir members were telling me, "You give good sermons. We listen to what you're saying." You know what? Your lives are all sermons that they're paying attention to as well. And the examples that we all set are being watched by the little ones that are in our lives.

And so, young adults and young children are part of this body of Christ, and it's imperative upon us to live lives which are mindful of what's not only good for me and my personal life, but what's good for us as the body of Christ, and even what's good for God?

Because where Paul goes with this is not only are our bodies meant for the Lord, but the Lord is meant for the body. Now, that's a puzzling phrase. But think about this. Not only are we dedicated to God, but God has dedicated Himself for our bodies.

And the way that Paul puts it is he wants to put His Spirit and His presence into our bodies as a living temple. Listen to the way he puts it, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God?" Not only are we for the Lord, but the Lord is for us and for our bodies.

His Spirit is for our bodies, to enliven them and to help them to live for Him. It's kind of paradoxical, but one of the principles is the more we surrender our autonomy to God, we actually gain more self-control when it comes to our appetites and our temptations. Why is that?

Because the more we surrender our lives to the Lord, the more the Holy Spirit of the living God is dwelling within us, empowering us to live a godly life. And so those fruit of the Holy Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and the last one, self-control, are all given to us as gifts because God is in our heart, manifesting His life and in His presence.

So you want to be free from sexual addiction or any other addiction for that matter? Draw close to the Lord and allow the Spirit of the living God to manifest the fruits of those Spirit in your heart and in your life. But it's even more than that. Also, the Lord is meant for our body in the sense that He gave His body in order to purchase our bodies. Listen to the way Paul puts it, "For you were bought with a price.

Therefore, glorify God in your own body. You are not your own." Jesus died on a cross in order to purchase us to God. And so this body that I have right here, not only is it a temple of the Holy Spirit, it also has been purchased by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and is holy unto Him. He gave His body to save my body.

Now that's a pretty powerful thing to think about, but that also can greatly inform the way you steward it and the way that you think about the way that you handle your body. So lastly, what do we do if you want to respond to a crazy sermon like this? You know, that you find yourself with aspects in your life that aren't in alignment with the teaching of Scripture when it comes to your ethics and your morals.

Well, what the world would tell you to do is, well, the church just needs to get with the times. That's not the answer. I'm just going to tell you that. The answer is that we need to align our lives with the Lord. And so what that fundamentally means is that there might be repentance that needs to take place in your life. In other words, turning away from sin.

Now it's always easier to do like my friend did and never get yourself wound up in a difficult situation. Can you imagine if he had moved in with that young lady and they started to intertwine their lives and some of the wreckage that might have happened as a result of that? Always best never to put yourself in the situation in the first place. But once you find yourself enmeshed and wrapped up in doing things and in a pattern of life that is not of the Lord, you have to move towards faithfulness.

And here's the promise of God for you if you find yourself in that. Number one, you can be forgiven. That is, again, why Jesus died on the cross, to purchase your body. Number two, the gift of the Holy Spirit and the indwelling of the Spirit as you as the temple of the Lord will help you internally be motivated and to accomplish the things that God is calling you to do.

And number three, you are members of this body of Christ, of which Paul has been challenging us for you to be aware of and recognize that your connectedness to the body of Christ actually provides an incredible accountability to help you to walk faithfully in this world. This group of people, they've all made mistakes. There's a bunch of sinners sitting in here in St. Mark's. You all know that, right? Yeah.

And so nobody's casting rocks at your lifestyle or what you've done, but we're all here to help one another, to live faithfully to the Lord. And that's what it means to be the body of Christ and the redeemed people of God. So, walk in the love of God and manifest the holiness of life because you're not your own. You have been purchased with the price. You're the temple of the living God.