

# HONOR GOD WITH YOUR BODIES

1 Corinthians 6:1-20

Key Verses: 6:19-20

*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 honor God with your bodies.*

In today's passage, Paul addresses two of the issues that plagued the church in Corinth—lawsuits among believers and sexual immorality. These issues are also relevant to us today, as we live in a society where lawsuits and sexual immorality are widespread. These are practical teachings for us. As we meditate on this passage, let us think about how to honor and glorify God through our daily lives.

## I. LAWSUITS AMONG BELIEVERS (1-11)

Look at verse 1. *If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord's people?* The church in Corinth was not immune from conflicts. The believers had many disputes. Given the divisions they had in the church, conflicts among them were more pronounced. St. Paul's heart was broken, not because they had disputes, but because of the way they handled the matters. Instead of praying to God to ask for his wisdom and seeking advice from the church leaders, they took their disputes to the ungodly court for judgment.

Some people love to bring lawsuits against others. Some years ago, a woman sued McDonald's when her legs were burned by hot coffee as she tried to add sugar in it in a moving car. A man sued Kraft Foods for putting trans-fat in their Oreo cookies. A nursing student in Pennsylvania failed a class twice and then sued the school for not helping with her anxiety. We are not surprised by many frivolous lawsuits. But St. Paul saw the lawsuits among the Christians in Corinth as a serious spiritual problem. Why? What's wrong with settling disputes with the help of the secular justice system?

Paul rebuked them for seeking a ruling from those whose way of life was scorned in the church (4). They had their spiritual leaders in the church wise enough to judge a dispute between them (5). Instead, one brother took another to court—and this in front of unbelievers! (6) It was shameful for the Christians to expose their sinful nature in front of ungodly judge and audience who would point a finger at them with a smile on their face. But there was more fundamental problem for the Christians than just airing their dirty laundry in front of unbelievers. Look at verses 2-3. *Or do you not know that the Lord's people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!* Paul reminded them of their spiritual position or identity in God's world. He asked them twice, "Do you not know?" Do you not know that the Lord's people will judge the world? Do you not know that we will judge angels?

Paul teaches us that God's children will be given a higher position than angels in the kingdom of God. The Greek word for "judge," *krino*, also means "to rule or govern." Believers in heaven will take part in the judgment of the fallen angels and exercise authority over the holy angels. Christ has been exalted above all the angels (Eph 1:20-23). Paul says in Roman 8:17: "Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory." As coheirs with Christ, we will share in his authority, including his authority over the angels (Mt 19:28; 2Ti 2:12; Rev 20:4). As God's children, we have dual citizenships in heaven and earth. Our life on earth is a preparation or a dress rehearsal for our life in heaven. Knowing that, how should we settle trivial disputes among us while on earth? One thing is clear. We should not take our brother or sister to the secular court for judgment. Because doing so is not only unwise and shameful, but ridiculous. Why? Consider two Supreme Court Justices in Washington, say, Justice Roberts and Justice Gorsuch. Suppose one day they share a \$15 taxi ride that results in a dispute. Judge Roberts wants to pay only \$5 because he is a senior justice, but Judge Gorsuch says that such unfair payment system based on seniority is against his judicial philosophy. What do you think they should do to settle the dispute? Wouldn't you say it would be utterly ridiculous for them to take the case to a small claims court in D.C.? But in Paul's eyes, this was what the Corinthian brothers were doing. As God's children, they would judge the world. They would judge angels. But they were taking their trivial cases to the ungodly for judgment.

There are disagreements among believers. We know this. We may conflicts concerning money, children, or property. Should we take such matters before the ungodly judges to settle for us instead of resolving them prayerfully within the church? We are children of God. We are called to love one another. Taking a brother or sister to secular court is no way to show our love for one another. Look at verses 7-8. *The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers and sisters.* The existence of lawsuits in Corinth revealed that they were already defeated. Sure, the secular judge would have ruled for one Christian brother against the other. Then what? What would happen to their relationship in the community? The matter would be settled legally but bitterness would intensify. The court judgment would not help them to love each other. On the contrary, it would further damage their relationship. This is exactly what Satan wants. He wants us to be divided and defeated. A better way would be to simply concede. Paul said, "Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?" (7). Jesus also said in Matthew 5:40: "And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well." This is the way to grow in the image of Christ. To build a Christian community with love, we must be willing to forgo our own pride and materials to build others up rather than tear them down with things like lawsuits. Sometimes, losing is winning in Christ. This is the secret of true victory. We need to trust in God who is the ultimate Judge even if we may appear to be weak when we do that.

Let us look at verses 9-10. *Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters*

*nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.* In a 2014 CBS News poll, among the Americans who believe in an afterlife, 82% said they would go to heaven, while only 2% said they were headed to hell. This means that a lot of people who commit the same sins Paul lists here think they will inherit the kingdom of God somehow. What would God say about this? Four words: “Do not be deceived.” People are deceived by Satan to think that they will somehow escape God’s judgment and end up in heaven, despite their unforgiven sins before God.

What about the Corinthian believers and us? Paul says in verse 11. *And that is what some of you were. 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.* The answer is that we will inherit the kingdom of God only by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Corinthian believers accepted Jesus as their personal Savior and so did we. Some of us committed the same sins that Paul listed. But we were washed in the blood of Jesus. We were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. We were sanctified and still are being sanctified as we continue to walk with the Lord in our life of faith and mission. We will not end up in heaven by accident. We will be with Christ in paradise because of what he did on the cross to take away our sin.

## II. FLEE FROM SEXUAL IMMORALITY (12-20)

Look at verse 12. *“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.* St. Paul taught the Corinthians that they were set from sin and death by the blood of Jesus. Indeed, they were free! Then some of them took this teaching in the wrong way. Like many young people in our society, they took freedom to mean doing whatever they felt like doing, whether it was beneficial or harmful. Paul said about this in Galatians 5:13: “You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.” When we give into sin in the name of freedom, we are far from free for we become slaves to sin.

Look at verses 13-14. *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.* Some Corinthians said, “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both.” This sounds spiritual. They probably borrowed this idea from the Gnostics who taught falsely that spirit is all that matters and body does not matter. Thus, you can do whatever you want with your body. They rationalized their sexual immorality this way. But can you really separate the mind and the body in this way? Just as God raised Jesus from the dead by his power, he will raise us also (14). We will be raised in our new body, but that does not mean we should defile our current body with sexual immorality. The body is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord (13).

St. Paul further explains this in verses 15-17. *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.* There is no such thing as mindless sex. When you defile your body with sexual immorality, your mind is also defiled. In popular movies, we often see the following scenario. A married man sleeps with another woman. His wife finds out and cries. Then he says, "Honey, it was just sex. It didn't mean anything. I love you." Do you really think such sex means nothing to him and to the marriage? Paul asks, "Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body?" (16). Eugene Peterson paraphrases this part: "There's more to sex than mere skin on skin. Sex is as much spiritual mystery as physical fact. As written in Scripture, 'The two become one.' Since we want to become spiritually one with the Master, we must not pursue the kind of sex that avoids commitment and intimacy, leaving us more lonely than ever—the kind of sex that can never 'become one.'" Committing sexual immorality is like uniting ourselves with a prostitute. Instead, we should unite ourselves with the Lord to be with him in spirit (17). Paul says in Romans 12:1, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship."

Why does St. Paul put so much emphasis on sexual immorality? Because this sin was so widespread in the city of Corinth. Yes, but I also think because this affects the lives of many other people. When a father commits sexual immorality, his whole family suffers, his wife and his children. Families are broken up. Children are born to unwed mothers. They grow up without fathers. Ministries are destroyed when spiritual leaders commit sexual immorality.

So how can we avoid sexual immorality? Verse 18 says: "*Flee from sexual immorality.*" This is how we can avoid sexual sin—run away from it! Don't flirt with it, thinking you have a strong willpower to overcome it. Just flee from it. Joseph in Genesis 39 was a 17 or 18 year-old male with healthy body. He was well built and handsome. His boss's wife noticed this and seduced him day after day, saying, "Come to be with me!" He refused, saying to her, "How can I betray your husband who trusts me? How could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" Still, she would not give up. One day when the two were alone in the house, she grabbed him by his coat and said, "Come to bed with me." Joseph left his coat in her hands and ran out of the house. Well, you know the rest of the story—she accused him of rape and he was thrown into prison. But Joseph did not commit adultery. He ran away from the persistent seduction.

St. Augustine of Hippo had been a womanizer before he was changed by Jesus. He used to visit prostitutes in town. One day, after his conversion, he ran into one of the prostitutes on street. As soon as he noticed her, he turned around and began to run the other way. She called out to him, "Augustine, it is I." Without stopping, Augustine shouted back, "Yes, but it is not I."

Again what is the best way to avoid sexual immorality? We should flee from it. I think the Billy Graham Rule is a good one. A young leader should not get into a car with a woman alone, unless it is his wife. Pornography is a big challenge to many young people today and to some Christian leaders, as it is readily available online. What should

we do? We should flee from it. Don't click on the link. We should not flirt with it, just because no one is watching. If we do, it will defile our minds and get us addicted. We have to remember that God is watching. The Holy Spirit is with us 24/7. We should not grieve him. Still, some people may ask, "What's wrong with enjoying some soft porn?" Look at verses 18-20a. *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. We should remember that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit who is in us. We are not our own. We belong to God. How so? We used to be slaves to sin. But Jesus redeemed us by paying a price to purchase us. He paid the dearest price, that is, his life on the cross! How can we defile our body and mind by committing sexual immorality? Let us read verse 20 together. "... you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies."* If we do our best to honor God with our bodies, he will certainly help us to live a holy life. Let us repent our sins. Let us run away from sins. Let us actively offer up our bodies as instruments of righteousness (Ro 6:13). Let us surround ourselves with God-fearing people who can be our accountability partners (2Ti 2:22).

In conclusion, we should honor God with our bodies by living a holy life. We live in a sinful culture. Many sinful acts are not only permitted in the name of freedom but also celebrated. However, we learn today that our bodies are a temple where the Holy Spirit dwells. The Holy Spirit gives us true joy and true hope. He cannot help us when we ignore him and actively commit sin. May God help us to flee from sin and honor him with our bodies!