

Glorify God in Your Body

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- [0 : 00] I encourage you to turn to 1 Corinthians to the second of our Bible readings on page 928. And this week we're finishing a series on the first chapters of 1 Corinthians.
- Well, I think that you could say that you've made it when they name something after you. If they name a football oval or a building or a meeting room or a park or a bridge or something like that.
- I think if that happened to you, then you could say, I've made it. Well, so it was for the Corinthians. Not specifically the Corinthian church, but the Corinthians of ancient times.
- They'd made it because the people of ancient Greece had even coined a word about them or from them. To Corinthianize. That was to commit sexual immorality.
- Now, you may not particularly think, well, that's a great thing. But the Corinthians we've seen were fairly boastful people. And as we see in this chapter, their boasting extended not to simply their spiritual maturity, so-called.
- [1 : 15] Which actually they were lacking. But here we find in this passage that they're boasting in their sexual immorality. The culture of their age was well and truly imported into the culture of their church.
- And that's why Paul is writing these chapters 5 and 6, in fact, which we're looking at this morning. If Corinth at large was bad enough for the phrase to be coined to Corinthianize, then it seems that the practice of this church, this new and rather fledgling church, was even worse in some respects.
- Paul says it's actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you and of a kind that is found not even among the pagans. That is, we expect them to be bad.
- But this seems even worse. And the example is, a man is living with his father's wife. The father may or may not be alive.
- That doesn't matter. And by calling the woman the father's wife implies, I think, that it's not the biological mother. Rather, it's a stepmother. And when it's literally it's the man has his father's wife, and that suggests a sexual, well, it implies clearly a sexual relationship, and one that's ongoing.
- [2 : 40] It's not just a lapse, a one-night stand. This is an ongoing relationship that is being practiced by this man in the church.
- Presumably the woman is not a member of the church, although that's an implication in that the issue is addressed to the man, not to the woman. And the Corinthians themselves, though they're not practicing the same, they, in fact, are boasting.
- You are arrogant, verse 2 says. Should you not rather have mourned, so that he who's done this would have been removed from among you? That is, they think that this is okay.
- That they're actually somehow boasting that their Christian liberty means, wow, we've got even a church member who's living with his father's wife. They're arrogant about it. They're not mourning or grieving this serious sin.
- Well, the issue of toleration of sin in the life of the church is one that plagues the church from these early days in the New Testament through to the current day as well.

- [3 : 53] For some, it seems, like in Corinth, they take it that Christian liberty, Christian freedom, gives a freedom to more or less do what you like.
- God will forgive. God's merciful. For some, it seems, at least in modern times, there's a confusion. Welcome the sinner.
- And therefore that spills over into an acceptance of the sin, or at least ignoring the sin. And for others, I think, there's this confusion from Jesus' words.
- When he said to the woman caught in adultery and at that issue, let the person who is without sin cast the first stone. And so it seems that modern Christians are very slow to pick up a stone, because we're all sinners.
- We all continue to sin. So who are we to judge any? And therefore there's silence in the church over matters of clear, persistent, unrepentant sin.
- [5 : 01] In older days, the three marks of a church were the reading of the pure word of God and its reading and preaching. Secondly, the celebration of the sacraments, the baptism and the Lord's Supper.
- And then thirdly, church discipline. The third of those is almost non-existent in many modern churches, it seems to me. Not an easy issue, and that's what Paul addresses in the verses that follow.
- How should these Corinthians be reacting to a man in their church congregation who is in a sexual relationship with his stepmother, presumably? Well, firstly, the issue, the first thing to recognize is that judgment from God is a reality.
- Very often, we're quick to deny judgment as though, in fact, God's mercy extends to anyone and everyone. The serpent in the Garden of Eden was the first to deny that God would judge.
- And that heresy continues. So Paul says in verses 3 and 4, though absent in body, he's away from them in Ephesus at the time, I am present in spirit, and as if present, I've already pronounced judgment in the name of the Lord Jesus on the man who's done such a thing.
- [6 : 19] Paul is saying here that God or the Lord Jesus himself, in fact, will judge, but it's very clear that this is a sin. And so Paul is declaring the fact that it is under God's judgment.
- The second thing, though, he goes on then, well, how do we respond now in this situation? How do these Corinthians respond? So he goes on and says, when you are assembled, my spirit is present with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.
- The context is clearly the assembly of the church, congregation, when you are assembled, it says, so that in a church meeting or gathering, whether it's on a Lord's Day or some other time, this man will be, in effect, excommunicated is the word that tends to be used.
- He will be expelled from the church fellowship because of this sin. Remember that the sin is unrepentant and persistent. It implies this man has been told that this is wrong, but he ignores that sort of word.
- And so now, in a sense, the final or maybe penultimate step is that he would be expelled from the church fellowship. The language that's used is to hand over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, not the destruction of the body in the sense of putting him to death, but rather perhaps putting to death the fleshly, non-spiritual, pagan life.
- [8 : 02] to hand over to Satan is a sort of very strong language. Paul uses it in 1 Timothy about another person in another situation. The language is also used in the book of Job where God hands over to Satan Job.

and it's a little bit similar to say the thorn in the flesh that Paul has and mentions in 2 Corinthians where somehow Satan has brought this thorn to him that God does not remove.

Whatever it actually means, and there's an element of formality in this gathering that this man will be expelled and handed over to Satan. The idea will be that somehow he may receive some element of punishment as a result, but notice very carefully this is not an idea of final judgment.

Excommunication is ideally the penultimate step, the second to last step. The last step would be that the man is restored, repentant to Christian fellowship.

So the end of verse 5 says so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. That is the idea is not just that he's kicked out forever and condemned, but that in being expelled from Christian fellowship he's being made aware of the seriousness of his sin, that it's unrepentant, and being handed over to Satan will bring him to repentance and come back into Christian fellowship.

[9 : 33] If this man is the same man mentioned in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, then indeed he's repentant. That's a hypothesis, but there is certainly in 2 Corinthians 5 a sinner who is repentant, but we're not told whether it's the same person nor what his sin was.

Well, church discipline is a very challenging issue. None of us like confrontation, and the times when I've had to exercise some form of discipline has been particularly agonising in a way.

It's certainly easier to avoid it, to say, well, I'm no better, I can't cast the first stone. But we need to recognise here what I've just said, that the aim of this is to bring this man to repentant behaviour, and that's a good thing, and worth the pain.

The second thing to recognise is the effect if it's not dealt with. We often have a weak view of sin, that if somebody's private life is not on God's standards, well, so be it, that's their private life.

But God doesn't view it like that. Sin is powerful and contagious. Paul likens it to yeast. A little yeast will infect the whole of the ingredients and leaven the whole lot.

[11 : 06] And Paul is saying, in effect, that if sin is ignored or tolerated in Christian fellowship, that actually the whole lump will be leavened by sin.

It doesn't mean that everyone will go out and sleep with their stepmother. It doesn't mean that everyone will commit the same sin. But when serious sin is ignored or tolerated in Christian fellowship, then in fact it actually compromises the whole ethical standard of God.

And it actually decays the Christian fellowship. And some friends who've, well, people I know who've done some analysis of churches and so on would argue that that's in fact what happens.

The churches decay when there is no church discipline of serious sin. That's what Paul means in verse 6. Your boasting is not a good thing.

Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? And in this paragraph he uses as an analogy the Jewish celebration of Passover.

[12 : 14] Passover is still a Jewish festival. It goes back to the time of Moses early in the Old Testament. It's the time when Israel was released out of slavery in Egypt and came towards the promised land.

On that night they were to kill an animal, the sacrificial Passover lamb and smear its blood on their doorpost so that over that night God would spare the Israelite houses when he punished Egypt.

But as well because they left Egypt in haste the food that they were to eat was not leavened. It was also called the feast of unleavened bread and the yeast in fact in the annual celebration thereafter was to be put out of the house.

As a part of celebrating the Passover Jewish people will take out all the leaven and yeast from their house. Paul uses that analogy now of the Passover sacrifice.

but he uses it at a moral level. So in likening sin to leaven or yeast, using the Passover example, he's saying to these Christians, put aside evil and malice and sin in general because the real Passover lamb is Jesus' death.

[13 : 35] Verse seven, clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, so that you may be a new batch, as you really are unleavened.

That is, you're believers in Christ. You really are unleavened. You don't belong with the leaven of sin. For our Paschal lamb, our Passover lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed.

therefore, let us celebrate the festival not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Paul's used the analogy of leaven and sin, but he's extended it and applied it morally in effect. He's saying Jesus has died.

That's the gospel, the power of God that we've seen in these past few weeks. Christ crucified the power of God. Therefore, because you're believers in Christ crucified, put aside sin.

[14 : 42] The power of the death of Christ is to extend to a purified life. Paul keeps coming back in these moral and ethical sections as we see today to the power of Christ crucified to purify the Christian lives.

That's in fact what we saw at the end of last week in chapter four. Paul is saying I'm coming to you soon. I've heard all your arrogant talk about spiritual maturity which is not in fact the reality.

When I come back, he says in verse 19 of chapter four, I will find out not the talk of those arrogant people but their power. For the kingdom of God depends not on talk but on power.

power. The power he's referring to is the power of godly living and spiritual maturity and that's carrying over into this section now.

This is the issue that's confronting them and Paul is in effect saying when I come to you, will I see the power of the gospel with transformed lives or not?

[15 : 49] God. And that's why he goes back to Christ's death in verse 8, 7 and 8 because that's the basis for the power for transformed lives.

Paul goes on to perhaps clarify a misunderstanding that the Corinthians have had. He's already written a letter which we don't have. So actually one Corinthians is at least two Corinthians technically.

I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral persons. Not at all meaning the immoral of this world or the greedy and robbers or idolaters since you would then need to go out of the world.

That is, we live in the world, we do associate with idolaters and pagan sinners. We can't avoid that in our life. We're not to become an exclusive holy huddle like some Christian sects have tried to do during the years.

But Paul's issue here is not about identifying and associating with the pagans out in the world but with the practicing unrepentant sinners in the church.

[16 : 54] Now I'm writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother or sister who is sexually immoral or greedy, is an idolater, reviler, that is a slanderer, a drunkard or a robber.

Do not even eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judge those outside, that is pagans, is it not those who are inside, so-called Christians that you are to judge?

God will judge those outside, drive out the wicked person from among you. It's actually the third time that Paul has talked about excommunicating this person, driving them out from among you, sending him out of the fellowship back in verse 2 and so on.

Paul is saying there that we live in a world of pagan sinners, sinners, we associate with them in the world, but in the Christian fellowship there's no such place.

Remember, we're not talking here about the person who's struggling with sin and repenting and striving to be moral and godly. We're dealing here with a person who's had his sin exposed, has been confronted with it and refuses to repent and continues to practice that sin, living with his stepmother in this case.

[18 : 05] But it's not the only case. Notice Paul uses a list of terms in verse 11. Sexually immoral, greedy, idolater, reviler, drunkard, robber.

By calling people those names, Paul is identifying people not who just occasionally might morally lapse, you know, a person who might get drunk in a sense and then regret it, but the person whose life is typified by these things, a person whose life is consistently or typically drunk or slandering or greedy or immoral, etc.

We're dealing here with persistent sinful practice that is unrepentant. And Paul says if a Christian is living a life like that, don't associate with them, have nothing to do with them, shun them, as a way of shocking them into the judgment that they need to turn away from in repentance back to God, excommunicate them out of the fellowship.

We might think it looks a bit harsh, but remember the purpose of that is that they repent and come back. And remember already their sin has been confronted with and they've refused to repent or heed the warnings.

love. Well, within the church today, with the church at large, I suppose I mean, the dominant voice we hear, it seems to me, is love.

[19 : 41] Love people. Love any people. Love all people. Whatever they do, whoever they are. God is love. And so we love and accept them. the trouble is that we don't know what love is, it seems to me.

The church today is all very strong and saying love the sinner, love the greedy, love the sexually immoral, love the idolater. But true love does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.

Our world is confused about what love is and so was Corinth. That's why Paul wrote the famous chapter later in this letter. And if the Corinthians boast in their spiritual maturity or boast indeed that a member of their fellowship is committing idolatry, but they have not love, they are nothing.

Love disciplines, love rebukes, love corrects persistent sin. Love does not tolerate unrepentant sin. Love seeks repentance even at the cost of excommunication.

Because love seeks holy lives, godliness, humility and faithfulness. For love does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.

[21 : 01] Paul's last few, these last verses of chapter 5, dealing with the issue of confronting and even judging to a degree the sin of a practice of a Christian, leads him to the issue of judging and disputes between Christians.

Christians. This is another area of failure of the Corinthians and another way in which they reflect the culture of their pagan world. He says at the beginning of chapter 6, when any of you has a grievance against another, do you dare to take it to court before the unrighteous, that is to a secular court, instead of taking it before the saints, before Christians that is.

Not before the holy Christians, but any Christian is a saint. the context here is, Paul is dealing with the Corinthian church that seems to have disputes between its church members, and they are quick to take it to a legal level, and what's more, outside the church.

And the implied problem here, well there are a few, one is the lack of dealing with it in the church and reconciliation, the other is that it brings the name of Jesus, the Lord of the church, into disrepute in the pagan world, when the Christians can't even sort out their affairs amongst themselves.

The context here is not a context where at a commercial level we may have a legal issue that we need to take to court. For example, you buy a house and there's something wrong with it and you need to take it to court or VCAT or something or other, and you find that the person that you're taking to court is a Christian, that's a different issue than here.

[22 : 42] This is where there's disputes within the Christian fellowship and that's taken to a secular court. And Paul is saying this is bringing Jesus' name into disrepute and we Christians ought to settle and work out our affairs before the saints.

Why can't Christians in your fellowship exercise some jurisdiction over this matter? Is there none in your fellowship that is wise enough to do that?

So Paul goes on in verse 2, do you not know that the saints will judge the world? That is, he picks up some Old Testament expectation of Daniel and Jesus' words in Matthew that the Christians will actually have a role in judging the world on the day of the Lord.

And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? That is when Christians in your own fellowship are in dispute. Why can't you deal with it yourselves is what he's saying.

Do you not know that we're to judge angels to say nothing of ordinary matters? So if you have ordinary cases, then do you appoint as judges those who have no standing in the church? That is, who aren't Christians, pagans.

[23 : 46] Why? Why do you do that, he's saying. And I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to decide between one believer and another?

But a believer goes to court against a believer and before unbelievers at that. Paul is shaming the Corinthians to see that their disputes and litigiousness is bringing shame and disgrace on the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is pagan practice that has just been taken over into church life. And he's saying you should be different in the way that you behave. So serious is this that Paul says in verse 7, in fact, to have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you.

That is, if you can't resolve your differences amicably and humbly. And then he goes on in verse 7 to say, why not rather be wronged?

Why not rather be defrauded? Well, that's a challenge, isn't it? When we're wronged or we're defrauded, when we're sinned against, we're not going to take that very lightly.

[25 : 00] We want justice, we want recompense, we want revenge. We might speak ill of the person who's done it to us if we don't get a fair outcome.

We want our rights. We want what we've lost. We want it back. It's ours. Paul says, is it not better to even be wronged or defrauded than to take it to court before secular courts?

Now, Paul is saying nothing more, in effect, than Jesus teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, turning the other cheek and so on. This is very challenging, I think, because in our society, but probably the Corinthian society as well, we hear words about claiming our rights all the time.

The rights of a mother, of a father, of a child, unless they're unborn. The rights against your neighbor if they build a house too big or something like that. Rights against government or councils, etc.

It's my right to do this, to have that, and on and on it goes. This preoccupation with rights is actually, in the end, cultivating a selfish society.

[26 : 15] And Paul is challenging that quite severely. You see, love is not self-seeking. Love seeks the other person and not ourself.

In fact, their very treatment of all these lawsuits makes the Corinthians themselves wrongdoers. Verse 8, you yourselves wrong and defraud and believers at that.

That is, they're full of sin that is not being dealt with, that is not being repented of. Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God?

Do not be deceived. Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers, none of these will inherit the kingdom of God.

Again, the language that's being used there implies ongoing, persistent, consistent, or typical behaviour. Not the occasional lapse or falling that's repented of and regretted and turned away from.

[27 : 18] But somebody whose lives are driven by and typified by those sorts of behaviours. Notice too that it's not simply about sexual immorality. There are other things that are just as serious and just as persistent and need the same sort of attention.

Again, Paul comes back to the power of the gospel as he deals with this. In verse 11, this is what some of you used to be. Used to be, not what you still are.

You see, the power of the gospel is not you come as you are and stay as you are, come as a sinner and stay in that sinful practice. No. The power of the gospel, the wisdom of God, the cross of Christ crucified, is that you come as you are, but you don't stay as you are.

And Paul says this is what some of you were, not what you are now, what you were. Some of these Corinthians in this church were fornicators, they were drunkards or revilers, they were practicing homosexuals, they were greedy and slanderers and thieves.

But not now. The power of the gospel, the power of Christ crucified, the power of the cross has changed them. And that ought to be what we expect in our own lives and in others.

[28 : 42] When somebody comes to faith in the cross of Christ, lives get changed. changed. It's the point of the gospel. Not simply to be forgiven, but to be changed, purified, sanctified, made more and more in the image of Jesus Christ.

And that's what the Corinthians have failed to understand. They have, in fact, a weak view of the gospel, not a powerful view. It's why Paul was so insistent in chapters one and two to say that the cross of Christ is the power of God.

Maybe not in the world's eyes, but in God's eyes because it's powerful to purify sinful lives. And that's what Paul's referring to in verse 11. That's why he's strong on this issue of church discipline.

Because the power of the gospel changes people. And if this person is unrepentant, then he's resisting the gospel. His whole spiritual destiny is in severe jeopardy.

And so he's to be expelled from the congregation, to wake him up like a prodigal son in a far-off land, so that he turns and comes back in repentance and finds the power of the cross of Christ purifying a sinful life.

- [29 : 59] Well, Paul finishes chapter 6, again correcting a potential misunderstanding of earlier teaching. It seems that the Corinthians had misunderstood Paul's teaching about liberty, the Christian freedom.

They thought, oh, it means that we're free to sin. But in fact, it's freedom not to sin. Maybe in particular, part of the teaching of Paul had been, well, as believers in Christ, whether you're Jewish or not Jewish background, no longer are you bound by some of the Old Testament laws like the food laws.

Jews, of course, will not eat pork or prawns or other things because they're unclean. But for example, in the New Testament, in Jesus' teaching in Mark and Peter's vision in Acts, it's clear that all foods are clean.

We are free to eat. And so the Corinthians, thinking that our physical body is perhaps unimportant, bringing in some Greek philosophy rather than Christian teaching about the resurrection of the body, something Paul deals with at the end of this letter, they thought, well, the physical body is unimportant.

We're free to eat whatever we like and therefore sexual relations, well, we have the same sort of liberty. Not so, says Paul. All things are lawful for me. Notice it's in quotes.

- [31 : 13] Paul's quoting the Corinthians, but not all things are beneficial. Liberty is not licensed to do anything. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be dominated by anything.

That is, we're not to be come or stay enslaved to wrong practices. food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food.

And God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant, sorry, the body is meant not for fornication, but for the Lord and the Lord for the body.

Not a low view of the body like Greek philosophy, but a high view of the body because the ultimate destiny is a resurrected body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power.

So when we're believers in Christ and believers in the cross, our destiny is a resurrected body. We belong to the Lord Jesus Christ like the bride of Christ. There is to be a purity about how we deal with our bodies.

- [32 : 22] Actually, the Christian teaching, though it's much more restrictive than our very permissive sexual age of the last 40 or 50 years, actually places a higher dignity on the human body than our modern society ever does.

A dignity that will be seen in the resurrection completed. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute?

That certainly seems to be what the Corinthians were doing frequently and often. These Corinthianizing Corinthians. Never, Paul says, do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her?

For it's said the two should be one flesh. There's a very big seriousness about sexual sin. That's the issue that's particularly plaguing the Corinthians, but it's not the only issue that should lead to excommunication when it's unrepented of.

But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Paul is making it clear here that Christian liberty or Christian freedom does not give license to sexual promiscuity or immorality.

- [33 : 36] And the seriousness of such sexual practice is actually breaks our union with Christ. Unless there is repentance.

So Paul says in verse 18, shun fornication, flee fornication. The word is the same at the first verse of chapter five. It brackets these two chapters together.

It's a general word, pornea, linked to where we end up with the word pornography. But that's not what the word means. It's a general word for all sexual immorality.

Shun it. Flee it. In fact, keep on fleeing it is the sense of the command here. That it's not just shun it once, but you'll need to keep fleeing it because our world thrusts it in our face all the time.

The temptations from pornography and advertising. The temptations from people that we meet or seduction. The vulnerabilities of times when we're alone or traveling or whatever it is.

[34 : 43] Shun, flee, fornication. Keep doing so. It's why something like our marriage enrichment course is so important. To keep strengthening the bonds of marriage marriage to give us greater resistance against faithlessness.

Paul is teaching Corinthians here about how serious their sins are. And how serious, not just this man in an incestuous relationship with a stepmother, but general engagement of prostitutes or other sexual immorality for which Corinth was so famous.

How serious such behavior is in the eyes of God. God. It drives a wedge between us and the Lord to whom we belong.

As Paul goes on in verse 18, every sin that a person commits is outside the body, but the fornicator sins against the body itself. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own?

And for the third time in this passage, at least, Paul comes back to the power of Christ crucified, the power of the gospel as he deals with these ethical issues.

[35 : 57] For you were bought with a price. The price, of course, is Jesus' death, his blood. That's the price that God paid for us.

But when bought not to be who we are, but to be who we have already become in Christ, to become like him. We've been bought to be purified.

Therefore, Paul says at the end of verse 20, glorify God in your body. Because of what God has done in Christ, in the death of Christ, the power of the gospel, we are to be different people.

We've been made different people by that gospel, and we are to practice that difference in our life. Remember what Paul has said about that in these two chapters.

Because Christ is the Paschal or Passover lamb who has been sacrificed, therefore, chapter 5, verse 8 says, we celebrate the festival of Jesus' death by godly living, sincerity and truth, not malice and evil.

[37 : 06] It has moral and ethical implications. And then in chapter 6, verse 11, you used to be fornicators, idolaters, revilers, slanderers, etc.

But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified. Language that is applying to our identification in the powerful death of Jesus on the cross.

And then thirdly, at the end of chapter 6, you are bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body. You are bought by Jesus' death.

It should change you morally and ethically. No wonder, you see, Paul said back in chapter 1, the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing.

They don't want moral purity. but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. Let's pray.

[38 : 13] O God, our Heavenly Father, we thank you for the extraordinary power of the blood of Jesus shed for us on the cross. Thank you that you've bought us with such a high price.

And we thank you for the power of his blood that is purifying and changing and washing and cleansing us to make us more like him. Lord God, we pray that that same power will be at work in our lives by your powerful spirit.

Helping us to resist temptation and flee it. Strengthening us to put aside our persistent sinful practices. giving us grace to repent and power to live as we ought to live in the image of Jesus Christ.

Amen. Amen.