

## ***LIVING SACRIFICES, HOLY AND PLEASING TO GOD***

Read: Pr 23:26-8    Text: 1 Co 6:12-20

1. Our body: temple of the Holy Spirit
2. not for sexual immorality, but the Lord
3. united with Christ, not a prostitute
4. the sin against our own bodies

*And so: Honour God with your body*

It was only back in chapter 5 that we read about the immoral brother who was sleeping with his father's wife. Maybe you couldn't really relate to the situation there, maybe it was a bit far removed from anything you might do. But a chapter and a half later we hit the general guiding principle for how we should use our sexuality.

The guiding principle is that we're members of Christ's body, bought at a price, temples of his Holy Spirit, and so we should honour God with our bodies.

### **Point 1**

In fact, that's the guiding principle in all of life. We should honour God with our bodies. We're urged in Romans 12 too, in light of God's mercy, to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – that's our spiritual act of worship. God wants us to be free from sin. He wants us to live lives dedicated to him.

And it's sometimes funny how people are willing to change the way they live for people they love. There used to be four of us in Geelong who would get together for a card night every now and then. 3 of us were married, the 4<sup>th</sup> guy was single. And the single guy was always complaining when the rest of us decided to call it a night in the early hours of the morning and head home.

But then one day he got himself a girlfriend. And at the next card night the girls decided to watch a video while we played cards. At 10.30 the movie finished. And in comes his new girlfriend telling him it's time to go - they don't want to keep us up too late. And this time there's no complaints about how early the

night was or anything like that. It's just 'yes dear' 'no dear' - and that was the end of our card night. And in the same way that we're willing to change our lives for the people we love, we're willing to change the way we live for the God we love.

There's a couple of other reasons here, too, why we live God's way - our bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit. We've talked about that a few times over the past couple of months. Mainly it's the church that the Bible describes as the temple of the Holy Spirit. We're all individual bricks in that temple.

And the Holy Spirit fills the church in the same sort of way that God filled the temple in the Old Testament.

But in this passage it isn't the church as a whole being described that way, it's each individual believer. Each one of us is a temple filled by the Holy Spirit.

But that means that we should only use our bodies in ways that are appropriate as far as God's concerned. You only have to think back to how the priests in the Old Testament were careful to only use the temple and the things in the temple the way God had said. They knew how some priests had even been killed by God early on for doing the wrong thing in the tabernacle. And especially the High Priest entering the Most Holy Place – only going in once a year at the right time – only doing the things that God had said he should do.

And we should only be using the temple of our bodies the way God has said too.

As well as that, God has bought us at the cost of Jesus' precious blood. We don't belong to ourselves, we belong to him. We're not slaves to sin any more, we belong to Jesus. But again, that means we listen to him, and we do what he says.

In fact, there was a procedure in the Ancient World that slaves could use to free themselves. They could save up the price for their freedom and then pay it into the temple treasury of one of the local gods. The understanding was that they now belonged to that god who had bought them from their owner with the slave's own money. It meant that as far as anyone else was concerned, they were free.

And Jesus has bought us with his precious blood. We belong to him. He's our Lord and King. We're his citizens, his slaves. We're here to do what he wants.

## **Point 2**

And because Jesus has bought us, our bodies aren't here for sin, they're dedicated to him. And specifically in this passage, they're not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord.

You might have heard not so long ago again about how young Asian girls are being smuggled into Australia for prostitution. You hear of the same kind of thing happening in Thailand and other countries all the time as well. And we're pretty horrified to hear about it, especially when you hear some of the ages these kids are. But we forget that God feels that way about us when we get involved in the wrong things. We're taking our body, which has been dedicated as holy to him, and using it in ways that he can't stand.

It seems that the Corinthians were using these catchy phrases at the beginning of the passage to justify their behaviour. There's a chance they might have even got them from Paul himself. But they were applying them in ways that he would never have used them.

Paul had probably used phrases like that to fight the Jewish legalism that had started to float around in some parts of the church. The legalists were thinking back to the Old Testament and saying that if you wanted to be saved you had to be circumcised, you had to eat the right foods and not eat others, you had to hold to the right Old Testament days and feast and celebrations. And Paul was saying that in Christ, none of this mattered anymore, there were no unclean foods anymore, there were no unclean practices, everything's permissible for us in Jesus Christ. He didn't mean that we're free to sin. But we are free from these kinds of Old Testament ceremonial regulations.

And even though God has given us our stomach for food, and food for the stomach, he hasn't given us a body for sexual immorality. He's given us our body so that we can honour him with it. The conclusion

they'd drawn from that catch phrase was completely wrong as well.

And we need to be careful not to justify our weaknesses and favourite sins by taking verses of the Bible out of context and using them to jump to the conclusions we want to hear. Because even though we might convince others, maybe even convince ourselves, we're still going to suffer the consequences, and we're still going to have to face God one day. Sins have a habit of finding us out.

### **Point 3**

One thing the Corinthian men were struggling with especially, was sleeping with prostitutes. And maybe we shouldn't be too surprised - Corinth was full of them. The pagan temples employed prostitutes as part of their worship. As well as that, the Corinthian Christians didn't seem to think it mattered too much what they did with their bodies – it was another hangover from the way the Greeks thought in general. So using prostitutes was just another thing they'd dragged with them into Christianity out of their pagan past.

The only thing is, when we become Christian, we're united with Christ – we become one with him spiritually. We become members of his body here on earth.

As well as that Genesis 2 says that when two people are married they form a 'one flesh' connection that they don't have with other people. But that connection's made in a way too when 2 people sleep together.

The question is, should we take members of Christ body and unite them with a prostitute? When it's put that way, it sounds worse than asking if your spouse should become a prostitute. It's only one step away from asking should we unite Jesus with a prostitute, and one's who was probably connected with the idol worship in pagan temples at that.

You can understand why Paul's answer is a resounding, 'Never!' Christians with the spiritual unity we have with Jesus shouldn't be involved sexually with the wrong people. We shouldn't be sleeping with prostitutes. We should only be sexually active in the right context, which is marriage.

#### **Point 4**

And then Paul uses one more argument that's a bit harder to understand. All other sins are outside our body, but in this one we sin against our own bodies – so flee from sexual immorality.

And it's true that most sins are against other people. Lying, cheating, stealing, murder, gossip, slander – all of these kinds of sins are against other people. They break the second law of love. And yet there are a few others that are against our own bodies – things like gluttony, drunkenness, self-mutilation and suicide - all of these are sins against our own bodies too. So what's Paul on about?

But it might be helpful to know that the Greek word for 'body' means more than the English word. The Greek word refers to our whole person, body and spirit. But in English, we just mean the part of us that's flesh, bone and blood. So Paul could be saying that all other sins are outside our person, even if some of them affect our flesh, whereas in this one we sin against our own person in a way we don't with the others.

And what he'd mean, then, is that in sexual sin, because of the one-flesh relationship that's formed with the other person, we share our whole person with someone else in a way that only God and a husband or wife deserve. A connection is made that just doesn't happen in any other sin. Our spouse deserves that relationship. And Jesus does too in a spiritual sense. But no one else does.

The way to stop yourself from sinning against God, your spouse, and your own person like that is to flee sexual immorality. The idea is that when you're faced with temptation that you're having trouble standing against, turn around and run, have a cold shower, avoid the situation, do whatever it takes.

And maybe fleeing doesn't sound very flattering. It probably isn't the best look. But at least for the Corinthians it was especially good advice - because in Corinth the temptation was everywhere. They could hardly avoid it. But isn't Australia like that too, temptation everywhere? Maybe still not as bad as

some places – but bad enough.

And you can avoid going to Kings Cross. You can get Net-Nanny to save you from stumbling on most of the porn websites. You can avoid the adult columns in the back of the magazines and newspapers you read. But sometimes there are temptations you just can't avoid. But if you come across things that you're not up to standing against, better to flee from them, than fall for them, and sin again, and face the consequences.

## **Conc**

And as we said earlier, we do it because our first commitment is to God through Jesus Christ.

You know, more and more you hear about amazing medical breakthroughs where whole parts of the body have been transplanted. Someone's been involved in an accident. They're lost the use of an eye, an organ, or a limb. And one is available from someone else – so the doctors transplant it to them, and they regain the use of whatever it was.

It probably doesn't surprise you, though, that now it does what they want it to do. It might originally have been the hand of someone else, but it doesn't do what that other person wants any more. It's part of a new body. And it now does what that person wants it to do.

But we're the same. Maybe at some time we weren't part of the body of Christ. But now we are. We've been transplanted. And so we don't do everything that we used to do. We do what Jesus wants us to do. He's our owner. He's our King. We live to serve him with out bodies, and with our lives.