

Church Live Re-Visited: Session Six - Part 3

by Ron Bailey

Ron Bailey explores the significance of the body in Christian theology, contrasting Corinthian beliefs with Paul's teachings on the body as a temple of the Holy Spirit.

Duration: 21:44

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 6:19

Topics: "Body Stewardship", "Sexual Purity"

Description

This sermon delves into the cultural background of Corinth, where the mindset was influenced by sacred prostitution, Epicurean philosophy of seeking pleasure, and Stoicism's self-reliance. Paul addresses the Corinthian Christians, emphasizing that the body is not a tomb but a temple for the Lord, challenging the prevalent idea that the body is insignificant and can be used however one pleases. He highlights the importance of honoring God with our bodies, recognizing that they belong to Him and should not be used for sexual immorality. Paul stresses the concept of stewardship, declaring that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, bought with a price, and should be used to glorify God.

Transcript

What I call sexual rights, and I need to explain a little bit, as quickly as I can, about the background again of Corinth. Corinth was a city which in previous centuries had actually had a temple to Venus, and part of the temple ritual was sacred prostitution. So, the idea of prostitution being part of religion and not being at all offensive was kind of part of Corinth's way of thinking about things.

Added to that, you've got certain basic philosophies that were existing in places like Corinth. You've got people like the Epicureans who, although the intellectual ones lived sort of quite modest kind of lifestyles, you've got the ordinary working people in the street kind of Epicureans, who would actually say, if you want it, do it. If you enjoy it, go for it.

Because the Epicureans believed that the purpose of life was pleasure, and that you were to kind of go in that direction. So, that's another, that's a way of thinking that's part of the mindset of the city of Corinth, that you just, you do what you want, and you please yourself, and that's simply why we're here. And then you've got the Stoics, and the Stoics are people who, they're famous, there's a famous story about a Stoic little boy who kind of went to school with his weasel in his toga, and it killed him because it ebbed through his chest during the class, and he didn't make any sound at all, he just kind of stuck it.

That's Stoicism. There may be other words for it, but that's Stoicism. In other words, a Stoic is someone who is not removed by, there's a tremendous kind of arrogance and pride in this, I will do what I want to do.

There's a very famous poem, I've actually got a copy of it here to read to you, which really epitomises how the Stoics felt about the thing, and it's this famous poem that has the last line in it, I am the master of my soul, by W.E. Henry. He wrote this when he just had his leg and foot amputated in the hospital. He said, out of the night that covers me, black as the pit from pole to pole, I thank whatever God may be for my unconquerable soul.

This is Stoicism. In the felt clutches of circumstance I have not winced nor cried aloud, under the bludgeonings of chance my head is bloody but unbound. Beyond this place of wrath and tears looms but the horror of the shade, and yet the menace of the years finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how straight the gate, how charged with punishments the scroll, I am the master of my fate, I am the master of my soul. That's Stoicism. Tremendous kind of arrogance that I can do this thing, I will do this thing.

Now all these things were part of the way that Corinthian people think. Remember Christianity is fairly new to this environment, and this is the way these people think. So the reason I'm saying that is to try and explain what is an almost unbelievable situation here, where you find Paul apparently having to explain to people that Christians don't use prostitutes.

And you say, well how, what kind of Christians are these that don't know this? Well they're the kind of Christians that have spent generations with a completely different mindset. To them, they have this phrase, it's one of their hymns, they used to say, Soma Sema, which technically means, the body is the tomb. They believed that the body was evil.

The mystery religions of those days, later on the Gnostics, believed that a different God created physical things. They believed that only spiritual things, well holy, only spiritual things came from the true God, and a different God had created physical things. It's not very far from Christian science, and Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy in some ways of it.

But there's this idea that things were completely, that the body, the body was just a mess, it was of no importance, it didn't matter what you did with it, you could use it any way you liked. You could either, you could be ascetic and you could discipline it, and you could show your strength as a stoic, or you could just say, well if it suits your name, just do it, which is the Epicurean way. It didn't matter, this was the whole pattern, that the body was of no significance, it did not matter what you did with the body.

Now if you say, well this sounds incredible, this is exactly what happened in Bhutan with Buddhism. Bhutan's third most famous saint is a man who went through the length and breadth of Bhutan, deflowering virgins and stealing men's wives, and showing his sexual prowess, and you say, well how can such a person be a saint? Well because he saw, he understood, that actually it doesn't matter, because the body is only an illusion anyway. It doesn't matter what you do with your body.

If you see this, it doesn't matter. If you can see this truth in your mind, that's all that matters. I'm asking you to understand that.

Am I communicating this to you? It's such a totally different mindset to us, that we think, well I don't know where do you start with all this? But this was not dissimilar to the mindset of Corinth. The body was of no significance. It was of no, just of no significance.

Now Paul's got something to say about that, which will count as a revelation to some of these people in Corinth, and maybe it will count as a revelation to some people in our day, Generation 2. It's interesting isn't it, how we're not so far away now from these things again. Or this kind of hedonism as it's called, which is really the wishing of pleasure. You know, you do what you want to do and you please yourself and nothing else matters.

That's it. Short life, happy life, don't want to live forever do you? I mean, these are the things that people say. You just don't because it's so.

Because the body is just a tomb, and the faster you get out of it the better, it doesn't matter what you do with it. Okay, I don't believe that, I'm just telling you what they say. Paul's going to say something, let me cut to the chase and tell you what Paul's going to say.

Paul is going to say something quite different. Not soma sima, which in a sense is the body is a tomb, but soma meos, the body is a temple. This is going to be an entirely different concept for these people in Corinth.

The body is a holy thing. It's created as a holy place to be a shrine for God, that God can inhabit where God can be. Sometimes you meet people and the pattern of their life has really been, well it's been this Corinthian pattern, they've been in all kinds of wickedness that you can hardly kind of bear to think of.

And then God comes along and he says, this is what you used to be like, it's going to change now. This body of yours that you use for abominable things, I'm going to come and live in it. I'm going to make this my temple.

And this to me is the gospel in all its glory. This is what he says here. Oh let me say, you know I mentioned, this has got running in from verse 12 now.

You know I said previously that Greek doesn't have punctuation marks. It may be that there are a couple of things that Paul says here which are actually kind of strict proverbs, as to say the kind of thing that people were saying in Corinth. I'll show you what it means.

If you've got a more modern translation, you may have, in verse 12, you may have the words, all things are lawful unto me, in quotation marks. Because some people think that this may be one of the things that people said in Corinth. It's okay.

Everything goes. I'm in charge of my body. I own my body.

I deal exactly with my body. What I want to do with my body, it's mine. You actually hear people kind of say this in our day as well.

They say well, you've been a mortal baby because the body belonged to the woman and she can do what she likes with it. And the man has no say in it sometimes because the woman's rights. It's her body.

Well, this was the kind of idea that it's yours and you can do what you like with it. You have authority over it and that was all there was to it. Anything was lawful.

But this is what Paul's comment to that statement is. All things are lawful unto me. That's the statement.

But all things are not expedient. Expedient means helpful or profitable. All things, he really isn't addressing the thing.

The question isn't actually denying it. He's just simply saying whether that's true or not. And there's a sense in which with hundreds of God has put in the body, all things are lawful but all things are not expedient.

Expedient has this sense of carrying something forward. All things are lawful but not everything moves the process along to its destination. All things are lawful but not everything carries on in the direction.

Not everything moves to where God wants it to be. So he says but all things are not expedient. And then he says this.

All things are lawful for me but I will not be brought under the authority of any. This is distinctive Christianity. That although God has put desires in the body, the Christian is not under the authority of them.

He is not under the power of them. He is not to be driven by them. He is not to give way to them in the sense of them dominating and controlling the way of his life.

That is not true for a Christian. He doesn't live like that. He has another authority in his life.

He has the kingdom of God as his authority in his life. His king is not his body and its instinct. His king is Jesus Christ and his will.

And it goes on and it says, verse 13. Maybe these phrases too were a quotation from the script. Meats for the belly and the belly for meats.

In other words, it's again, it doesn't matter what you eat with the body. You just eat it. You do what you like with it.

It has no consequence. And Paul says this. He says that's short-sighted.

You're not kind of thinking ahead because God will destroy both it and them. And then he makes this statement. But the body is not for sexual immorality.

But for the Lord. This is a tremendous statement. This is a wonderful statement.

A statement that maybe we need to find an easier way of saying it. But it's a statement we need to get to our young people not as another rule. Not as another burden for them to carry.

But as the gospel that the body is for the Lord. The body is for the Lord. The body with it's hunger that God put in it.

It's hunger for personal survival. It's hunger for racial survival in sexual instinct. All these hungers that God put in the body.

He put them there but not to have authority over you in the body. So that they might serve God's purposes. He goes on to say here Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord and the Lord

for the body.

The Lord is for the body. God is for the body. God is not just for the spirit.

This is another problem I think that evangelicalism has led us into in times past. We spent so much time talking about giving your heart to Jesus and asking Jesus into your heart and Paul says I beseech you brethren by the mercies of God that you present your body as a living sacrifice because as human beings the body is part of it. It's not just the envelope but it is the envelope.

It's part of who we are and what God has made us to be and God wants us to present this to him as a weapon, as a sword yet the sword has been in the wrong hands for a long long time but now is our opportunity to give it back to God and to put it into God's hands because the body is for the Lord and the Lord is for the body and then he says God has both raised up the Lord and will also raise up us by his own power Do you not know that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of the heart?

I wonder what effect this had I don't know whether you try and imagine this maybe there are people who really they were so proud with their intellect so proud they could stand on their own feet come to their own conclusions didn't need anyone to tell them how to live their lives and then they hear these things and they say do you realise what you've been doing is you've been behaving as though your body was yours you've been saying my body is mine I can please myself when I deal with it and Paul comes along and says your body belongs to Jesus you're not your own this is how we come to this conclusion here he says I won't go into that one little bit about joining and becoming one flesh I don't have the time he says here that is joined to the Lord is one spirit flee sexual immorality verse

18 every sin that a man does is outside the body but he that commits sexual immorality sins against his own body this is a very important statement there's something different about sexual sin I'm not going to tell you what it is because I'm not sure what it is but there's something different about sexual sin Paul says every other sin is in a sense outside it's apart from the body but sexual sin actually has an impact upon the body it's sin against the body and your body is not yours your body actually belongs to somebody else I remember hearing an old story many years ago about a man who was travelling on a train and they were going a fair long journey and they began to play cards in the train and they got in a hat box and they began to deal the cards and they said to the man who was

sitting in the corner, shall we deal you in would you like to play? and he said no I can't play and they said well we'll teach you and he said no I can't play as my hands won't play and they said what do you mean your hands won't play as these aren't my hands these are the Lord's hands, you don't play cards now that's an old kind of a quaint old story but there's a truth here that our body is not ours it's not ours to leave in bed inappropriately it's not ours to stuff with food inappropriately it's not ours to risk inappropriately I'm not saying that you've got to be against every kind of excitement, that's not what I'm saying what I'm saying is that our body is actually a stewardship that God has trusted to us and that we are to live our lives conscious that our body is not ours but the

Lord's and it has implications because the sexual act of course is actually bodies, it's actually people surrendering to one another through their bodies have you ever thought that that's what it is sexual activity is people surrendering to one another through their bodies I can remember years and years ago speaking to the young people at Rora and I think there was a tape on it somewhere called with my body I thee worship but my subtitle was whose wife was that I saw you kissing which I thought was an interesting title

for young people because that person of course maybe is going to belong to somebody else it's going to have an entirely different destiny and you don't have a right to use that body in an inappropriate way you don't I know this is a kind of a council of perfection and I

know that this is I'm saying strong things here but I'm just talking about the implication I'm just talking about the principle just the principle at this point that your body is not yours for you to say I will do what I want with it I have deserved to stay in bed till 12 o'clock or I have deserved to have a complete blowout or I have deserved to go on a bender and drink myself stupid because I have worked hard all month you do not have that kind of right to your body because your body is not yours it's the Lord's he goes on to say here do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit I think this is just so wonderful this thrills me these bodies these heathen temples which have been used for every kind of abomination and God says I want to come and live here but it has to

be mine I won't share this place with anybody else your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you which you have of God and you are not your own for you are bought with a price therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's look at that line look at it whose does the body belong to according to that last verse verse 20 for you are bought with a price therefore glorify God in your body and your spirit which are God's can you see there is a kind of shared responsibility here your body is your body but it's not your body for you to do with what you want to do with it it's your body to do with it what God wants you to do with it this is stewardship this is the miracle of redemption of things changing ownership and coming back into God's order let's pray Lord

I want this to count to every heart here tonight as gospel not another responsibility not another inevitable area of failure I want it to count Lord with your promise living in it I want every heart to hear you say your body is the Lord's I want every heart I want every instinct in us to hear the gospel I want to preach to myself I want to preach to every power that's in me I want to say to every instinct that's in me it's mine to do with as God says it's mine God empowers me to serve him with this instrument of his purpose this amazing cooperation in which man and God co-work in the glory of salvation Lord I thank you that my instincts can bring glory to God they brought shame to me but they can bring glory to God I thank you that my body can bring glory to God I thank you that my spirit

can bring glory to God and I thank you it's true for every one of us Amen

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/JzcaCdVyyqGU.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ron-bailey/church-live-re-visited-session-six-part-3/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net