

1 Corinthians 6:12-20 – January 17, 2021

I have a sin to confess. Don't worry, I doubt that it's something that's going to disgrace our congregation or disqualify me from pastoral ministry. But it is definitely a sin of which I am guilty.

You see, I am a glutton. Like many Americans. Like many of you, I'm sure. And gluttony is a sin. We don't often think about it as such. Most of the time we don't think about it at all. We eat what we eat. We drink what we drink. We live how we live. And we don't think about such simple things in spiritual terms.

We're not hurting anyone else, after all. I can still love my neighbor while gorging myself at dinner and indulging my sweet tooth from time to time. And so it doesn't immediately register as a sinful activity. As something that hurts us spiritually.

When we do think about it, it's usually not because it has impacted us spiritually, but physically. I, for example, suffer from high blood pressure and sleep apnea and back pain. Those are directly related to my obesity, which is directly related to the foods that I eat and how much I eat of them.

Some of you may have high cholesterol. Or diabetes. Or any number of different health conditions directly relating to the foods you put in your body. Any of which may have forced you to be far more aware of what you eat and drink and how you live. But that's still not dealing with gluttony as a sin. As a spiritual malady.

Which is a little odd. Because the Bible is actually full of reasons why we should take care of our bodies. Yet, we don't think about it in those terms. We don't think about the things that we do to our bodies as being an issue of sin and righteousness. Of doubt and discipleship. We don't think about the fact that God cares about what we do to our bodies.

And he doesn't just care in a patronizing, "Oh I wish you wouldn't do that," sort of way. He cares in the same way that he cares about all sin. He cares like a judge. Looking at the evidence and deciding whether a person deserves condemnation and punishment for their behavior. God gets angry when we don't take care of our bodies.

Why do I know that God gets angry? Well, because God gets angry anytime we abuse his creation. God told us in the Garden of Eden to care for this earth. Subdue it, don't destroy it. Tend it. Steward it.

Treat it with the same concern that God himself would treat it, remembering always that even as we are masters of it, we don't own it. God made it to be a home for us. And actually, if you look at the times that God Himself destroys His creation, it's always as punishment for us.

And the same applies to our own bodies. We don't own our bodies. I know for a fact that I don't own my body because one day it will be taken away from me. And I can't do a thing about it. "*From dust you were created. To dust you will return.*" That is God saying, "I made you. I can destroy you. You belong to me."

God owns us. He made us. And he made us in a very special way. He made us with two parts: a soul and a body. And you can't really call yourself a human being without both parts. A soul without a body is a ghost, not a human. A body without a soul is a corpse, not a human. You are not a complete person without both a body and a soul.

And that should matter to us. Because every week, we come into this church, and we stand up, and we confess our sins, and we receive absolution. And we go to the Lord's Supper and we hear the words of Jesus himself saying, "Take eat, this is my body, for the forgiveness of your sins. Take drink, this is my blood, for the forgiveness of your sins." And we do it all with the goal of making sure our soul is healthy. And that's a very good thing to do.

But then we go home. And some of us let stress eat away at us. And some of us let alcohol destroy us. And some of us let laziness and gluttony weaken us. And some of us let sexual immorality rule our lives. And every time we do that, we abuse half of that person that God made us to be. We harm half of that good creation – called “our bodies” – that God has loaned to us for the duration of our lives. And that’s sinful. A sin that, of course, spills right back onto our souls, and the whole cycle starts all over again.

Paul addresses that sin head-on in our Epistle lesson today. And he begins by pointing out something very important: how you discipline your physical body is a effects how you discipline your soul.

Because the Corinthians have, apparently, become rather obsessed with the notion that all things are lawful for them. That they are now free in Christ. He has forgiven them of all their sins. And they are no longer bound by the Mosaic Law. They can eat whatever they want. Drink whatever they want. Live however they want.

Yet Paul warns them, “*All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be dominated by anything.*” In other words, you are free in Christ, but that doesn't mean that everything you do is helpful to you spiritually. You are free in Christ, and yet you can still be dominated – enslaved – by sinful behavior. And that does have consequences. Physically consequences and spiritual consequences.

He repeats back to them a phrase they already know well, “*Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food.*” This was a proverbial expression that basically meant, “Hey, if God gave me a stomach then he must want me to eat. So let's go eat until we can't eat anymore.”

But Paul points out that this is a dangerous attitude. Because it means that you are being ruled by your stomach. Ruled by your physical desires. And that stomach that rules you, that food that drives you, that pleasure that consumes you... it will all be destroyed. It's all perishable. Mortal. A thing of this world that will die with us and be buried in the ground. It is not of God's kingdom.

Gluttony is a sin. No different than the sexual immorality for which Paul berates the Corinthians in the next verses. No different than than hiring a common prostitute because you that overwhelmed by your lusts. Because regardless of whether the sin you're committing is in regard to food or drink or sex or whatever, it is hurting you. It is hurting you physically. And it is hurting you spiritually.

God cares about what you do with your body. And he doesn't want to see you suffer. These bodies of ours were a good gift from Him for our benefit. And this sinful world in which we live – with its disease and violence and disasters – it does enough to damage our bodies without us helping.

These bodies were a gift from God and they will be a gift from Him once again. Not in the frail form of sinful flesh that withers like grass. But in the perfect, sinless form that His Son bought for us on the cross. You see, we know that God cares about our bodies most of all because of what He was willing to pay to make sure that we would have a body for all eternity.

He sent His Son in a human body to redeem our human bodies. He raised the body of His Son from death to life so that we would have a glimpse of how He will one day raise our bodies from death to life. As St Paul tells us, “*You are not your own, for you were bought with a price.*”

God took something He already owned – our bodies – and He purchased them all over again with the crucified body of His Son. For the purpose of remaking that which will turn to dust into a body that we can live in once again.

And while we wait for that new body that He has promised to us on the last day, we live with His Spirit within us. Who has taken residence in this sinful flesh and turned a pile of dirt and dust into a temple for God Himself.

So that He could live with us and in us. Washing us clean of the guilt of sin. Reminding us everyday that, no matter how prone to temptation our flesh is and no matter how weak and suffering our bodies be, we are a new creation and we await a new creation. That will forever toss weakness, suffering, and temptation behind us.

We are a temple of the Holy Spirit. And though that temple may one day succumb to death. Even then we know that the Spirit within us will carry our souls to be with the Lord, until that day when God makes us complete – body and soul – once again.

We are united with the Lord. We are one with Him. God glorified you when he gave you this body. God glorified you when he sacrificed his own body on the cross. God glorified you when he raised that body to new life on the third day. God has already glorified you more than you can possibly imagine. So glorify God in your body too. Amen.