

Thinking God's thoughts: The believers' body.

Bible readings: 1 Corinthians 6.9-20, Romans 12.1-2

This week we are wanting to think God's thoughts about the body – this is going to be really good news for a lot of you, because over the years there has been a lot of confusion over how we should feel about and treat our bodies – in fact even in the Bible there were people who were confused, so let's learn from their experience....

v.9-10 people living according to their bodies – lusts / appetites
Before we come down all hard and judgemental on them, let us understand why. Because they are spiritually dead – let me explain what I mean by that:

Gen 2.7 how we were meant to live – spirit / soul / body

Or the room with two views:

- Seascape / Forest = physical & spiritual realms
- In the Fall, the 'curtain was drawn' on the spiritual
- Adam did not drop dead when he took the bite, instead he was cut off from the source of his life
 - It darkened the room
 - It shut off light & life from God

What happens when disconnected from source of life? Like rechargeable torch, runs down, gets dim and then blinks out – this would be physical death.

Now instead of having access to God's life, power & wisdom to live life, there are only 2 other options:

To live according to the soul, making sense of ½ the picture, or to simply live according to the body, like an intelligent animal.

v.11 Paul says that those who are spiritually made alive have another choice – to live from the inside out. He has had to address this already in ch.2.14 and 3.3 where he chides them for acting like 'mere men' which they are not, they are born-again, children of God.

This is why it is important for us to learn to renew our minds, in the past we could only make sense of life by looking out of one window, now we realise there is a whole lot more!

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Vs.9-11 are actually good news for all of us, Paul tells us that even if we have lived according to the body, even if we have completely given ourselves over to lusts, and living like animals (see the description Paul gives in Rom 1.21-25, he is not being mean or inflammatory, he is accurately describing the process) – there is forgiveness and cleansing for anything we have done – there is no sin too great, and it is wrong if we categorise sins in a way that excludes people, all sins are an expression of living separate from God, either dominated by our bodies or by our souls – minds and emotions.

Remember the grace of God can change our lives – ‘and such were some of you’ - all past tense. We are forgiven and cleansed – and we are made alive: **we should no longer live as we used to.**

Paul is writing to the church in Corinth in the first century: For 1st century Greeks the body was of secondary importance; what really mattered was the soul – the body was either a prison to be punished through ascetic practices or escaped from through indulging the senses in pleasure – either way, it was ultimately irrelevant and it didn't really matter what you did with it – it was in this context that they heard about the resurrection of the body and were deeply challenged and unsettled by it.

You either needed to deny your body, or seek a ‘peak experience’ which would perhaps touch your soul, or give you a window into transcendence – the adrenaline junkies and thrill seekers are doing the same kind of thing, looking for a meaningful or spiritual experience through their bodies.

Add to this that the pagan temple of Aphrodite in Corinth had temple prostitutes to be involved in fertility rites, and the subject of sexuality and the Christians body was bound to come up!

So now the discussion is about how does the believer relate to his body and his natural appetites?

Matthew 6.25: Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?

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There is far more to your life than the food you put in your stomach, more to your outer appearance than the clothes you hang on your body.

Principles:

v.12 we must no longer be dominated by our bodies or our appetites

'freedom in everything' Nicholas King 'Yes, but that doesn't mean I'll surrender my freedom to anything'

MSG 'just because something is technically legal doesn't mean that it is spiritually appropriate – if I went round doing whatever I thought I could get by with, I'd be a slave to my whims'

- instead of asking 'is this forbidden, can I get away with it?' we need to learn to think and ask ourselves 'will this enslave me, is this good for me, what are the consequences of doing this?' cp what we looked at before thinking about the Niagara syndrome, ask yourself about where these things take you while you are still upstream and can make choices. Sowing and reaping, look at the harvest and ask yourself 'is this really what I want to reap?'

v.13 the body is still subject to change and decay but it still matters what we do with our bodies, we are not spirits or souls or bodies separately, but human beings, we are all of a piece.

v.13 foods for the body – when you are hungry you eat, so when you are aroused you have sex, right? This only makes sense if you are living on the level of instinct and appetite and we are more than that. Furthermore it is a lame argument 'Food for the belly and the belly for food' – is a specific matching of part to function, the whole body however is not designed for sex, but for the Lord.

Eugene Peterson sums up the argument best when he translates it 'First you eat to live, and then you live to eat' shows the transition from something good and life-giving to something that drives and enslaves us.

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Cp Mk 7 hunger is a purely physical appetite, lust and arousal, or even love are of a higher order, they impinge on our personality.

v.19 your body:

- a) has been bought by God
- b) is therefore not your own
- c) is designed to glorify God
- d) is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you.

'Let people see God in and through your body'

v.20 bought with a price – agarazo – cp redeemed: exagarazo, it's the 'out of' that gives us a picture: they have been bought but are still in the market place, they are free but are still living as slaves, we must choose to leave the slavery of our old way of living: how do we do it?

Romans 12.1-2 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. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.

- present your bodies a living sacrifice, renew your minds, this is your spiritual worship

Our bodies belong to the Father who made us, the Son who redeemed us and the Holy Spirit who indwells us – of course he is going to help us to live in his good, pleasing and perfect will.

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v.14 Gods spiritual power is available for our bodies if we will allow it (i.e. not short-circuit it)

v.15-16 you are part of the body of Christ therefore you cannot act or behave as though you were not.

v.17 our connection with God is in the spirit

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v.18 sexual involvement goes deeper than just the body – we saw last week that our body and mind are deeply connected and influence each other, here we find that the same is true with our spirits: there is a 'one flesh' relationship created, which is likened to the connection we have with God in the spirit – these Corinthians were sinning against their own bodies, their souls and corrupting their spirits

Jesus bought your body and you are joined to him

The Holy Spirit indwells your body and you are his temple

Bought (aorist tense) refers to Golgotha, where the price was paid. The figure is that of sacral manumission, whereby a slave, by paying the price of his freedom into the temple treasury, was regarded thereafter as the slave of the god and no longer the slave of his earthly master. **Therefore glorify**, the logical conclusion, is both negative and positive. Negatively, a believer should eliminate defiling things, such as fornication, and positively he should display the One who had come to dwell within. —Wycliffe Bible Commentary, The

Sex outside of marriage is a bit like a man robbing a bank – he gets something, but it is not really his, and at some point he will pay for it.

Sex inside of marriage however is like putting money in a bank, there is safety, security and over time it brings dividends and interest.

'Make it your habit to flee' – like Joseph with Potifar's wife, sometimes we just need to run. The best self defence is to be somewhere else. While it is often claimed that there is safety in numbers, there are times when there is more safety in exodus!