

1 Corinthians 06 - Litigation in the Church; Sexual Immorality in the Church

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1 Corinthians 6

(B) Lawsuits (6:1-11)

After addressing the issue of judging inside the church in 1 Cor 5, Paul now transitions to another report he received that the Corinthians were taking their fellow believers to court over trivial matters, to have unbelievers resolve their dispute. The extremely litigious Roman society had crept into the Corinthian church. Once again the problem was the Corinthians' lack of theological depth/maturity.

Paul addresses this issue by telling them that one day believers will judge the world and the angels, so how much more should they be able to judge amongst themselves now? The Corinthians were even defrauding one another, which is the conduct of unbelievers and inappropriate for those who are saved.

(a) The church's shame (6:1-6)

1 Does any one of you, when he **has a case** against **his neighbor**, dare to go to law before the **unrighteous** and not before the saints?

1 Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous and not before the saints?

1 When one of you has a complaint against another, does he dare to take the matter before those who are unrighteous and not before the saints?

1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?

- Jewish communities at the time had the *beit din*, a court system wherein they resolved disputes among themselves. Paul was pleading for the Corinthians to put a similar system in place among themselves.

- "...has a case" - a technical term for a lawsuit

- "...his neighbor" - based on the context, a fellow believer

— Paul is not advocating the institution of Christian courts, but rather that Christians who seek justice should submit to Christian arbitration or just resolve the differences in a Christian manner amongst themselves

- Paul is essentially asking, Why would you go to a legal court where an unrighteous judge presides rather than taking the matter before the saints?

— John Calvin, who studied law at two French universities before he became a theologian, keenly observed that the parties involved in lawsuits were motivated by greed, impatience, revenge, hostility, and obstinacy.

— Underlying motives in civil lawsuits are often incompatible with one's Christian profession. A lawsuit has a life of its own; it is a fight to the death. Winning regardless of the damaging effect on the defendant and witnesses).

- "...unrighteous" - the judges in these matters, who were unbelievers (v6,9)

2 Or **do you not know** that **the saints will judge the world?** If the world is judged by you, are you not competent *to form* the **smallest law courts**?

2 Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent *to constitute* the smallest law courts?

2 You know that the saints will rule the world, don't you? And if the world is going to be ruled by you, can't you handle insignificant cases?

2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

- "...do you not know" - third time so far in this epistle, used 6x this chapter (v2,3,9,15,16,19); also 3:16; 5:6; 9:13,24; 10x this letter

— In each case, Paul discusses a subject that the Corinthian Christians should have known, probably because Paul or others had previously instructed them. Paul knew the knew the answer, but they were not living it out. It's one thing to know theology, it's another thing to practice it.

- "...the saints will judge the world" - in the millennial kingdom, believers from the church age will judge the world with Christ (Rev 3:21; 5:10; 20:6). Judging is one aspect of ruling.
- The Corinthians were unaware of (or chose to ignore) their eschatological future, that one day they will be ruling and reigning with Christ, which included sitting in judgment. Since this is their future reality, they should be competent to rightly judge right from wrong among the smallest matters in life.
- The earlier revelation about saints ruling the world probably came from Dan 7:18,22,27; it's also found in the NT (Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30; Jude 14-15; Rev 20:4). We will also reign with Christ (2 Tim 2:12).
- Paul's point is that if the Lord will delegate authority to judge unbelievers to Christians in the future, we should be competent to settle disputes among ourselves now. In light of future eschatological judgment, decisions that believers must make in church courts now are relatively trivial.
- Another point is that Christians are generally competent to settle disputes between people, since we have the help and wisdom of the indwelling Holy Spirit available to us, as well as the Scriptures
- "...smallest law courts" - the most trivial cases, which are relegated to the smallest law courts
- This demonstrates that the types of cases that these Corinthian believers were bringing against one another were trivial, meaningless, and should've been able to be resolved expeditiously outside of court or before another believer
- It had become popular in Rome to bring cases to court over every little thing, which becomes even more of a problem as a culture becomes more wealthy. This was the problem in Corinth: they sued their fellow believers in order to become richer.

- 3 **Do you not know that we will judge angels?** How much more matters of this life?
- 3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life?
- 3 You know that we will rule angels, not to mention things in this life, don't you?
- 3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?
- "Do you not know" - fourth time this phrase is used in this epistle (10x total, 6x in this chapter); see note on v2
- "...we will judge angels" - believers have already passed through the heavens where angels reside and taken their seat in Christ positionally (Eph 1:3), but one day we will be resurrected and take our seat in Christ experientially
- At that time we will rank higher than the angels and will judge them. Evidently Paul meant the fallen angels. This may take place at the second coming when Satan is locked away in the abyss for a thousand years (Rev 20:1-3) or after the 1000 years when Satan is cast in the Lake of Fire forever (Rev 20:10).

- God did not reveal the fact that believers will one day judge angels earlier in Scripture; He revealed it here for the first time (Cf. Jude 6)
- The point Paul is making is, If believers will judge angels on matters of eternal significance, how much more should we be able to judge trivial matters of this life? How are you going to judge angels in the future if you cannot even solve small squabbles amongst believers now?

4 So **if** you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as *judges* who are of no account in the church?

4 So if you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church?

4 So if you have cases dealing with this life, why do you appoint as judges people who have no standing in the church?

4 If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.

- "...if" - third class condition, the condition of possibility. Paul is saying, maybe you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, maybe you don't, but assuming you do, if you have a court system in the church to help believers resolve differences, do you appoint unbelievers to be judges?

— The obvious answer is No, but this is in effect what they were doing by taking trivial matters between believers before an unbelieving judge

— Paul's point is that Christians should resolve their differences in the church rather than in civil law courts

5 **I say this to your shame.** *Is it so, that* there is not among you anyone wise who will be able to decide between his brothers *and sisters*,

5 I say *this* to your shame. *Is it so, that* there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren,

5 I say this to make you feel ashamed. Has it come to this, that there is not one person among you who is wise enough to settle disagreements between brothers?

5 I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?

- "I say *this* to your shame" - Paul previous told them that he wasn't writing to shame them (Cf. 4:14), but here he goes ahead and shames them regarding this specific issue

— What the Corinthians were doing, suing one another over trivial matters, was shameful, so Paul called them out directly

— The Corinthians should be ashamed that, by going to secular courts to settle their church problems, they were effectively saying that there was no one in their church wise

enough to settle these matters

- The church has come to a bad place when its members believe that they are more likely to get justice from unbelievers than from their own brothers
- They should have appointed wise and capable men from their own community to mediate cases for fellow Christians

6 but brother goes to law with brother, and that before **unbelievers**?

6 but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers?

6 Instead, one brother goes to court against another brother, and before unbelieving judges, at that!

6 But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers.

- "...unbelievers" - again shows that the judges to whom Christians were going to to adjudicate these minor squabbles were unbelievers (Cf. v1)

- A Christian brother taking a fellow Christian to court is sufficient proof that he has set aside the command to love his neighbor (James 2:8)

— Can a plaintiff in court have the spiritual, emotional, physical, and financial well-being of the Christian brother in mind? Love is the ultimate response that the Lord commands us to take: 1 Cor 13.

Clearly, this church did not understand its identity as an eschatological community, nor did it demonstrate much concern about its witness to the world.

This passage does not deal with how we as Christians should respond when pagans defraud or sue us. But if we apply the principles Paul advocated in dealing with fellow believers, we should participate in public litigation only as a last resort.

(b) Paul's judgment (6:7-11)

7 Actually, then, **it is already a defeat for you**, that you have lawsuits **with one another**.

Why not rather suffer the wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?

7 Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?

7 The very fact that you have lawsuits among yourselves is already a defeat for you. Why not rather just accept the wrong? Why not rather be cheated?

7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?

- "...it is already a defeat for you" - Christ's church has already lost when a Christian sues another Christian over a trivial matter

— Paul turns victory in court upside down: winning a lawsuit is a defeat for the church, before the judge even gave his verdict

- The shame of people who professed to love one another, and who supposedly put the welfare of others before their own, suing each other, was a defeat in itself
- This defeat was far more serious and consequential than any damages they may have had to pay if they lost the case
- "...with one another" - *meth heauton*, "with your own selves"; the use of this Greek term, instead of *met allelon* ("with one another") was deliberate, in order to show that in suing a fellow Christian, they were in fact bringing a suit against themselves
- It would be better to "suffer the wrong" and "be defrauded" than to fight back in such an unchristian way because loving one another and putting another's interest over our own is the Christian ethic (Matt 5:39-40; Phil 2:3-8; 1 Peter 2:19-24; 1 John 4:19)

8 On the contrary, you yourselves **do wrong** and defraud. And this to *your brothers and sisters!*

8 On the contrary, you yourselves wrong and defraud. *You do* this even to *your brethren*.

8 Instead, you yourselves practice doing wrong and cheating others, and brothers at that!

8 Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.

- "...do wrong" - *adikeō*, clearly Paul is referring to believers because he prefaces it with "you yourselves" meaning his audience, the Corinthian believers

- Even more shocking, some of the Christians in Corinth were not just the victims of wrong and fraud, they were the perpetrators of these things

- A litigious spirit is incompatible with fellowship. Remember, Thou shalt not covet.

Excessive litigation is a symptom of the disintegration of a society.

9 **Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived;** neither the **sexually immoral**, nor **idolaters**, nor **adulterers**, nor **homosexuals**,

9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,

9 You know that wicked people will not inherit the kingdom of God, don't you? Stop deceiving yourselves! Sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexuals,

9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

- "...do you not know" - fifth use in this epistle, third use in this chapter. With this question, Paul introduces another theological truth: the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God.

- Paul's point is that believers shouldn't act like the pagan unbelievers, because unbelievers will not enter the kingdom. He's using a rhetorical device designed to exhort his readers to recall something previously known.
- "you" - the key to properly interpreting this passage (along with the other "vice lists" in the NT) is to recognize the author's original audience (always believers) and follow the pronouns in the passage to understand who the author is referring to.
- In this instance, Paul uses "you" (second person plural) to address his original audience (Corinthian believers). We know this because Paul uses the second person plural "you" in the same way throughout this epistle (Cf. 3:1-3).
- This question was designed to prompt his readers to remember not to behave like those who have no share in the kingdom
- "...the unrighteous" - *adikos*, a new group that Paul brings into this passage; the "unrighteous" refers to unbelievers
- We know that "the unrighteous" refers to unbelievers because of the context: v1 calls the judges to whom the Corinthians were going to law before "the unrighteous" and v6 calls those same judges "unbelievers."
- Contrary to the most popular interpretation of this passage, Paul does not say, "Or do you not know that ***you*** (the Corinthian believers) will not inherit the kingdom of God? Instead, he asks the believing Corinthians whether they know that the **unrighteous** will not inherit the kingdom of God.
- The various "vice lists" in the NT (Cf. 1 Cor 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:5; Rev 22:14-15), including here in v9-10, have created a lot of confusion among Christians. Here are the six common interpretations of these "vice lists":
 1. Believers who will lose their salvation if they commit these sins.
 2. Professing believers who persist in these sins prove they are never saved in the first place.
 3. Believers who commit these sins lose fellowship with the Lord.
 4. Believers who commit these sins will miss the millennial kingdom.
 5. Believers who commit these sins will not be included in the millennial kingdom, though they will have eternal life
 6. Believers should not commit these sins because they should live like saints rather than unbelievers.

For more detail on each of these, and why #6 is the best interpretation, see Does the Vice List in 1 Cor 6:9-10 Describe Believers or Unbelievers?

- The contrasts in this passage are between believers and unbelievers (Cf. v1,2,4,5-6), not between believers who are spiritual and believers who are carnal
- Believers can still commit all of these sins, but Paul's point is that they shouldn't because they have been "washed," "sanctified," and "justified" (v11)

- It is troubling that the Corinthians were behaving "unrighteously" (v8) but that they were not among the unrighteous whose lives are characterized by these sins. Meaning, the saved Corinthians had the imputed righteousness of Christ, thus were righteous in the sight of God, yet they lived unrighteously. Their practice did not match their position; their orthopraxy (practice) did not match their orthodoxy (beliefs).
- "...will not inherit" - Jesus explained who will inherit the kingdom (Matt 5:3,10; Mark 10:14), whereas Paul explained who will not; this is clearly in a future context. "Inheriting" and "entering" the kingdom are synonyms in the Gospels (Cf. Matt 19:16; Mark 10:17; Luke 18:18).
- Jesus taught that "inheriting the kingdom" is equivalent to inheriting eternal life (compare Matt 19:16 with 19:23-24; Mark 10:17 with 10:23-25; Luke 18:18 with 18:24-26,30). The contrast is between those who will inherit (believers) and those who will not inherit (unbelievers).
- Paul is exhorting believers to not act like unbelievers, because unbelievers will not enter (future tense) the kingdom
- In some passages (here; Gal 5:21; Eph 5:5), Paul used this expression to describe the consequences of the behavior of unbelievers when he compared it to the behavior of believers
- Paul was apparently contrasting Corinthian behavior before their conversion with their conduct after their conversion (Cf. v11). He did not mean that Christians are incapable of practicing these sins, but that these practices typically characterize unbelievers. He was encouraging them to live like believers by not practicing these sins.
- The use of the future tense is definite: the unrepentant will never inherit the kingdom. Clearly this cannot apply to believers because we are righteous by definition. We have a righteousness from God apart from the Law that comes through faith in Christ (Rom 3:21-22).
- The examples that Paul gives all have to do with behavior, whereas our (a believer's) righteousness comes from our belief
- Where behavior is concerned, Jesus said it doesn't take unrighteous acts to disqualify us from the kingdom, it only takes an unrighteous thought. He gave anger (Matt 5:21-22) and lust (Matt 5:27-28) as examples but He could have listed many more, like greed, envy, jealousy, etc.
- "...Do not be deceived" - a warning; too many believers in Corinth failed to understand that the way Christians choose to live here and now will affect their eternal reward. Paul doesn't want the Corinthians to be deceived about God's requirement for believers to live righteous lives.
- It is unacceptable for a Christian to be characterized by the sins of those who will not inherit the future kingdom. Evidently, some of them thought that a believer's life could be

just like an unbeliever's life, without consequences (Cf. 5:1-2; 6:13ff). This was their deception.

— Many Christians today are deceived by this as well. The fact that we are eternally secure should not lead us to conclude that it does not matter how we live now, since we'll end up in heaven anyway.

- Paul uses the following terms:

- "...sexually immoral" - *pornos*, often translated as "fornicators"; it involves unlawful heterosexual activity; whoremonger; includes illicit intercourse between unmarried persons. The incestuous man (5:1ff) was committing fornication.

- "...idolaters" - *eidōlolatrēs*, worshipper of idols or false gods; a covetous person. Usually associated with fornication with temple prostitutes, which was also taking place in Corinth (Cf. 8:1—11:1).

- "...adulterers" - *moicheia*, faithless toward spouse; sexual conduct outside of the marriage setting

- "...homosexuals" - *malakos*, effeminate; means "soft" or "mild"; refers to the passive role in a homosexual union (the term "homosexual" [*arsenokoites*] refers to the active role); passive, submissive, "sodomite"

— Homosexuality has become politically protected in our society, but God condemns it, in both the OT and the NT. There are five passages of Scripture that speak directly to homosexuality: Lev 18:22; 20:13; Rom 1:24-28; 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10 (see notes on Lev 18:22). Each of the five passages entail a wholesale prohibition of all forms of homosexual sex

— Most people today don't realize how prevalent homosexuality was in the ancient world. Socrates practiced it; it was the subject of some of history's greatest literature; 14 out of the first 15 Roman Emperors practiced homosexuality.

- One interpretation of the "homosexual" reference in this verse is that Paul is not forbidding homosexual activity, since (in the mind of some) there are loving forms of homosexual activity. The abuse, which (they say) Paul is forbidding here, is defined as pederasty, the practice of a superior male paying for the services of a younger male who played the passive role.

— There are multiple objections to this view:

1. The idea of loving and moral homosexuality is never addressed in the Scriptures.
2. Every reference to homosexuality in Scripture is negative.
3. It is placed alongside other sins in the vice list that are absolute sins. In other words, there is no differentiation between loving and abusive drunkenness, covetousness, et. al., so it is inconsistent to differentiate with this one activity.

4. The Greek word *arsenokoites* (a word seemingly coined by Paul and derived from Lev 18:22 [*arsenos*, LXX] and 20:13 [*koiten*, LXX] is never used in classical Greek literature for the practice of pederasty, which would be expected since it was such a common practice. Further, many other words are used in the literature which Paul did not use.
5. This view rests on Paul depending on the Greco-Roman background even though the terms used are not common to Greco-Roman usage for pederasty.

The fact is, Paul is arguing against all forms of homosexual relationships based on Jewish Law background. Leviticus has nothing to do with the practice of pederasty. It refers to any man lying with another man as a man would lie with a woman (i.e. homosexuality in the broadest sense). In 1 Tim 1:10, another vice list, this word [*arsenokoites*] is used independent of *malakos*. Paul frequently depended on Jewish background and quotation of the OT (Cf. 1 Tim 5:18; Eph 6:2-3; Rom 15:4). Additionally, the word *malakos* means "soft" or "mild," and is not a technical term for a "call boy" in a pederastic relationship. The term in a sexual context refers to the passive partner in a homosexual relationship. This interpretation is consistent with Paul's teaching in other passages—namely the order intended by the Creator for proper roles (Cf. 1 Cor 11:1-16; Rom 1:20-32; 1 Tim 2:11-15). Thus, it is far more likely that Paul is condemning all forms of homosexual relationships rather than the specific abusive homosexual relationship (pederasty). This view is consistent with Levitical legislation and was well-known and the agreed upon interpretation among the Jews.

A Warning Against Word Studies

While "word studies" are good, they are also dangerous if we don't guard against invoking contexts to fit our preconceived beliefs and preferences. Anthony Thiselton, in his commentary on 1 Corinthians, warns that "word studies alone can lead humans to reconstruct God in accordance with their religious and power influences that result in reconstructing ethics and conduct to fit their moral and social preferences."

10 nor **thieves**, nor **the greedy**, nor those **habitually drunk**, nor **verbal abusers**, nor **swindlers**, will inherit the kingdom of God.

10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.

10 thieves, greedy people, drunks, slanderers, and robbers will not inherit the kingdom of God.

10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

- "...thieves" - *kleptēs*, an embezzler or pilferer; someone who takes something that doesn't belong to them
- "...greedy" - *pleonektēs*, covetous; may be manifested in a desire for what one should not have (Ex 20:17; Rom 7:7), or in an excessive desire for what one may legitimately have (Eph 5:5; Col 3:5)
- Note the seriousness with which God views coveting, by putting it in a list of sins that are widely regarded as serious
- "...habitually drunk" - *methysos*, drunkard; intoxicated
- "...verbal abusers" - *loidoros*, revilers; someone who criticizes in an abusive or insulting manner
- "...swindlers" - *harpax*, one who commits extortion; a robber

11 Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

11 Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

11 That is what some of you were! But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus the Messiah and by the Spirit of our God.

11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

- Again here, Paul's point is for these believers in Corinth to not imitate unbelievers. Don't pattern your life after these unbelievers because they have a different identity than these believers in Corinth.

— He is not making a comment on their salvation or eternal security, in fact he says to his readers that they were saved (washed, sanctified, justified)

- "Such were some of you" - "were" is in the imperfect tense, referring to the Corinthians on-going (as opposed to one-time) actions in the past, before they became believers.

Some of the Corinthian Christians had been fornicators and practiced other sins Paul cited before they trusted in Christ.

— The fact that at least some of them were no longer like this assures us that these sins can be overcome by relying on the transformative power of the Holy Spirit

— Jesus came to call not the righteous but the sinners (Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32; 1 Tim 1:15). He then ate with them in their homes (Matt 11:19).

- "...but" [3x] - *alla*, nevertheless; however; notwithstanding

— In Greek, this strong adversative occurs before each of the three verbs; Paul writes the 2nd person "you" in every verb form; it is acutely personal and emphatic

- "...you" [4x] - Paul's original audience, the Corinthian believers (Cf. v9)

- The fact that three things had occurred to them at the moment of salvation demanded that they live differently:
 - "...you were washed" - *apolouō*, cleansed by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit (John 3:5; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 3:21). The verb is in the aorist tense, describing a one-time action in the past (at the point of faith), with on-going results.
 - "...you were sanctified" - *hagiazō*, aorist tense, describing their positional sanctification (Cf. 1:2; Heb 10:10). The verb is in the aorist tense, describing a one-time action in the past (at the point of faith), with on-going results.
 - "...you were justified" - *dikaioō*, the Lord declared them righteous through union with Christ by faith, and by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit who indwelt them. The verb is in the aorist tense, describing a one-time action in the past (at the point of faith), with on-going results.
- They were different people (after coming to faith in Christ), therefore they should live different lives. However, this different lifestyle does not occur automatically. Believers need to participate by centralizing and prioritizing doctrinal truths and by learning to depend on the Holy Spirit.

Paul's point in this passage (v1-11) is that since He had made them saints, they needed to live like saints. They should not continue in, or return to, the sinful practices that mark unbelievers. We should become what we are in our practice because of what Jesus Christ has done for us in our position. This appeal runs throughout the NT and underlies every exhortation to pursue godliness. Our practice should match our position.

(C) Prostitution (6:12-20)

The final report from those out of Chloe's household surrounds how the Corinthians were engaged with prostitutes to fulfill their bodily lusts. Those among the Corinthians who were known as "the spiritual" (12:1) separated the spirit and the body, which permitted them to perceive of themselves as operating on a higher spiritual plane while permitting the body to have its lustful needs met. Paul challenged their view of the body by recalling three doctrines: the price Christ paid for the body (redemption), the Spirit indwelling the body as a temple, and God's future resurrection of the body.

- (a) Refutation of the Corinthians false premises (6:12-14)
 - (i) The false premise of Pauline license (6:12)

12 All things are permitted for me, but not all things are of benefit. All things are permitted for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.

12 All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.

12 Everything is permissible for me, but not everything is helpful. Everything is permissible for me, but I will not allow anything to control me.

12 All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

- Paul begins by arguing against the Corinthians' distortion of Christian freedom and their misunderstanding of the nature of the body.

— Paul was and is famous for his teaching on Christian liberty. He saw early on that Christians were not under the Mosaic Law; Galatians unfolds this theme. Unfortunately, his teaching was often misunderstood. Some of his hearers, namely the Corinthians, concluded that he advocated for no restraints whatsoever on Christian living.

- "All things are permitted for me" [2x] - this was likely a Corinthian theological slogan, used to justify sexual immorality. Paul uses this phrase 4x in this letter (6:12 [2x]; 10:23 [2x]).

— However, Paul informs them that legality is not the only test the Christian should apply to their behavior. There should be two restraints on our Christian liberty:

1. Is it helpful? Is it beneficial? Would engaging in this activity, although permissible, benefit me? In 10:23, Paul expands these questions to not only include what is beneficial for ourselves, but also to consider what is beneficial to others.

2. Will it enslave? Is there an opportunity, by engaging in this activity, that the activity itself will gain control and take priority in my life?

- "...not all things are of benefit" - Paul countered the Corinthian slogan by stating that even if something was "permitted" (or legal), that doesn't mean it is beneficial/profitable/admirable

- "...I will not be mastered by anything" - Paul's second counter to the Corinthian slogan was that although something may be "permissible," before engaging in it we should ask if it will be something that enslaves (gains control) over me

[1 Cor 10:23]

The reasonable use of my liberty cannot go to the length of involving my own loss of it.

It is a bad thing to create habits that are not easily broken.

We have no longer any right to do what in itself is innocent, when our doing it will have a bad effect on others. We have no longer any right to do what in itself is innocent, when experience has proved that our doing it has a bad effect on ourselves.

(ii) The false premise that sex is just a physical act (6:13-14)

13 Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, however God will do away with both of them. But the body is not for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body.

13 Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body.

13 Food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food, but God will make them both unnecessary. The body is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

13 Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them.

Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.

- "Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, however God will do away with both of them" - another Corinthian slogan that they used to justify sexual immorality

— They reasoned that the food and stomach were made for each other and temporal, so one could eat whatever he wanted. Jesus taught something similar (Mark 7:18-19), but they were using it in a way Jesus did not intend. Jesus had declared all foods clean so that for spiritual reasons one did not have to abstain from certain foods. He did not mean that one could eat as much as he wants to satisfy the stomach. That is the sin of gluttony.

— The Corinthians extended their slogan by reasoning that it applied to the body and sex; the body is made for sex and sex is made for the body. Therefore, fulfilling the body's lusts by having sex with prostitutes would not affect spirituality. The body was unimportant and would be done away with.

- "...the body is not for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body" - Paul counters the Corinthians' theologically incorrect slogan with a slogan of his own

— The body of the Christian is part of what the Lord has saved and continues to sanctify. Therefore, the body is for the Lord, for His use. Additionally, the Lord is for the body in the sense that He has a purpose for it. We are to present our bodies to Him as instruments of righteousness (Rom 6:13) and living sacrifices (Rom 12:2).

- The Corinthians' reasoning shows the immaturity and lack of spiritual depth that they had, a full five years after Paul spent 18 months there planting the church. They had not grown at all, as is evident by their rationale for justifying sexual immorality.

— Food and the stomach are physical and temporary, however the same is not true of the "body" and "fornication." Some in Corinth obviously concluded that since sex was also physical and temporal, it was also irrelevant spiritually. This is a false conclusion.

— The body is part of what the Lord saved and sanctified, therefore it is for Him, and we should use it for His glory, not for fornication.

— God uses the marriage relationship (and sex) to communicate His highest relationships, and fornication is absolutely contrary to His purpose (1 Thess 4:3-5)

14 Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power.

14 Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power.

14 God raised the Lord, and by his power he will also raise us.

14 And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.

- Paul further counters the Corinthians' faulty theological justification for fornication by introducing another counter-slogan

— His point is that our body has a future destiny, it is not going to just be disposed of. It is destined for resurrection in order to inherit the kingdom and to rule and reign with Christ

— Some of the Corinthians, however, did not believe in a future resurrection of the body.

Paul takes on this error in 1 Cor 15, but here he simply states a fact without defending it.

— Since the body has a future destiny (John 5:28-29; 11:24; Acts 24:15; 1 Thess 4:16-17), it should not be treated as if it were just for temporal pleasure

(b) Reasons why prostitution is wrong (6:15-20)

(i) Involvement of the Lord in immoral act (6:15)

15 **Do you not know** that your bodies are parts of Christ? Shall I then take away the parts of Christ and make them parts of a **prostitute? Far from it!**

15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be!

15 You know that your bodies belong to the Messiah, don't you? Should I take what belongs to the Messiah and unite them with a prostitute? Certainly not!

15 Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid.

- "Do you not know" - sixth time Paul has asked this question; as always, the answer is self-evident. The Corinthians should have known that their bodies were members of Christ (12:12,27; Cf. Rom 12:5-6).

— Our physical bodies are just as much a part of Christ—united with Him in spiritual union—as we are part of the mystical body of Christ, the church

— When a Christian fornicates with a prostitute, they take what belongs to God (their body) and gives it to someone else. Essentially, this is stealing from God.

— This does not happen in marriage because God ordained and approves of marriage (Cf. 7:2-5a,14), and permits us to share our bodies with our lawful mates

- "...prostitute" *porne*, from *porneia*, fornication, sexual immorality (v13,19)

— Taking a Christian's body and uniting it with a prostitute's body also involves the Lord in that immoral act.

- "...me *genoito*" - may it never be!

(ii) Sex is a spiritual act (6:16)

16 Or **do you not know** that **the one who joins himself** to a prostitute is one body *with her*? For He says, "**THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.**"

16 Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body *with her*? For He says, "The two shall become one flesh."

16 You know that the person who unites himself with a prostitute becomes one body with her, don't you? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh."

16 What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

- "...do you not know" - seventh time Paul has asked this question in this letter; each time, the answer was obvious. In this case, it should've been obvious to the Corinthians that when they had sex with a prostitute, they were joining their body with her body.

— Paul urged his readers not to think of sex as simply a physical linking of two people; God views sex as involving the entire person, not just the body. It is the most intimate sharing that human beings experience.

— The temple of Aphrodite on the Acrocorinth towered over the ancient city of Corinth, with 1000 prostitutes. They were frequented by the locals and tourists.

— "...the one who joins himself" - *kollomenos*, indicates that the sexual union constitutes a permanent bond between the parties; the bond lives, morally, in both, and neither is free from the other

— "...THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH" - quoted from Gen 2:24 [LXX]; Paul quotes this verse to show the union that sex creates

— A physical union takes place that symbolizes the spiritual union of a husband and wife in marriage. Sex deeply affects the inner emotional and spiritual conditions of the participants.

— Because of this spiritual union, it is improper to put sex on the same level of significance as eating food. Eating food simply sustains the body; sex with another person involves the entire body and is a spiritual act. There is no such thing as "casual sex"; it's an oxymoron.

— Sex is the most intimate union that a man and woman can experience. It deeply affects the emotional and spiritual condition of each individual. Paul addresses its importance in marriage in 7:2-5.

(iii) It is wrong to give to a prostitute what has been united to Christ (6:17)

17 But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit *with Him*.

17 But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit *with Him*.

17 But the person who unites himself with the Lord becomes one spirit with him.

17 But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

- Joining oneself to the Lord makes a person one spirit with the Lord. This is a spiritual union that is stronger than the bodily union formed by sex.

- Paul says that it is a serious thing to split your person by becoming one body with a prostitute when your spirit is one with the Lord
- Our relationship with the Lord is characterized by permanence, love, trust, edification, obedience, purity and life
- Contrast the relationship with the prostitute: it's momentary, without love, devoid of responsibility, mutually destructive, decidedly egocentric, shamefully immoral, degrading, and damaging to the soul

(iv) Sexual immorality is a sin against one's body (6:18)

18 Flee sexual immorality. Every other sin that a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.

18 Flee immorality. Every *other* sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.

18 Keep on running away from sexual immorality. Any other sin that a person commits is outside his body, but the person who sins sexually sins against his own body.

18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

- "Flee" - *pheugō*, escape; seek safety by flight. This verb is in the present imperative form, meaning it is a command, not a suggestion.

- This verse confirms a difference in sin...not all sin is same! The saying "sin is sin" is not accurate according to what Paul says here! Committing sin against our body, as sexual sin is labeled here, is sinning in and with the temple of the Holy Spirit.

— Sexual immorality is more destructive than other sins because the people who engage in it cannot undo their act. Gluttony and drunkenness hurt the body as well, but they involve excess in things morally neutral, and abstinence may correct their effects.

— Sexual immorality is also especially serious because it involves placing our body, which is the Lord's, under the control of an illegitimate partner (Cf. 7:4). No other sin has this result. All other sins are outside or apart from the body, in this sense.

— Sexual sin is like no other because of the bond formed by the sexual act. No other sin is like sexual sin.

(v) The body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit (6:19)

19 Or **do you not know** that **your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you**, whom you have from God, and **that you are not your own?**

19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

19 You know that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God, don't you? You do not belong to yourselves,

19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

- "...do you not know" - eighth time Paul asks this self-evident question to his readers
- Every time the Corinthians manifest a behavioral problem, Paul traces it back to a theological weakness. Theologically they should know that the believer's body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.
- They were separating the spirit from the body by thinking that the Spirit only indwells the spirit. Paul corrected this fallacy by stating that the Spirit indwells the body. If a person does not have the Spirit, he is not a believer (Cf. Rom 8:9,11).
- "...your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit" - this shows that the Spirit even indwells carnal believers. The Corinthian church is the best example of that: divisions, party factions, immorality, believers taking other believers to court, getting drunk at the Lord's Supper, and misusing their spiritual gifts.
- In spite of their terrible state, because they were true believers, they had the Spirit indwelling them. Proof that the indwelling Spirit is permanent in believers is in John 14:16.
- The Holy Spirit is the basis for living a spiritual life, and that is what Paul encourages the Corinthians to do
- "temple" - *naos*, (not *hieron*, the temple precincts); refers specifically to the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, where the Lord dwelled above the cherubim on the ark of the covenant (Cf. Ex 25:8)
- Paul could not have written these words to unbelievers...he is obviously writing to believers who are not walking with the Lord
- Paul is telling them that when they commit sin, particularly sexual sin, they are dragging the Holy Spirit into that sin with them because the Holy Spirit indwells them
- Earlier Paul taught that the corporate church is a temple that the Spirit indwells (Cf. 3:16), but here he teaches that the individual believer is a temple the Spirit indwells
- "...within you" - the Holy Spirit indwells every believer (Rom 8:9; Cf. Matt 12:6; 18:15-20; 28:16-20; Mark 13:11; John 14:17,23)
- He is a gift to us from God (1 Thess 4:8); He is the best gift God has given us thus far; consequently, we have a moral obligation to the Giver.
- See note: **Indwelling of the Holy Spirit** in John 7:39; also see [Holy Spirit](#) for a complete explanation of the ministries of the Holy Spirit.
- "...you are not your own" - the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence is a down payment or assurance that the believer belongs to God (Eph 1:13-14; 2 Cor 1:22). Therefore, "you are not your own" means that you are not free to do whatever you want with your body (Cf. Rom 14:7ff).

(vi) The Lord purchased the body (6:20)

20 For **you have been bought for a price**: therefore **glorify God in your body**.

20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

20 because you were bought for a price. Therefore, glorify God with your bodies.

20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

- Paul leveraged the purchase price for our bodies as an argument against sexual immorality. As unbelievers we were slaves to sin, but Christ paid the price to release us from sin's power. Therefore, our entire person/body has "been bought for a price."

- "...you have been bought" - *agorazō*, aorist tense, indicating a single decisive action, already taken; passive voice, meaning we had nothing to do with the purchase

- "...for a price" - God has "bought" every Christian by paying a very steep price: the blood of Jesus Christ (Rom 3:24-25; Eph 1:7)

- "...glorify God in your body" - because our entire person was purchased, not just our human spirit, Paul says our body is an instrument that should be used to glorify God rather than degrading Him through fornication (Cf. Rom 12:1-2)

— To "glorify God" means to mirror His essence (Cf. Matt 5:48). The body is part of this formula, therefore we are to mirror God's essence in our body, meaning use it as an instrument of righteousness (Cf. Rom 6:12-19).

— Typically, the NT emphasis is on redemption leading to freedom from sin (Gal 3:13; 4:5; Rev 5:9; 14:3), but here it is on redemption leading to faithfulness to God

There were believers in Corinth who would slip out at night to visit the (pagan) temple prostitutes on the Acrocorinth, because that's what people did in those days in the name of "religion." Some in the church of Corinth were involved in this practice, and Paul tells them that when they do this, they are bringing the Holy Spirit into this sin with them and grieving God's heart (1 Cor 6:19). Notice what he doesn't say...**he doesn't question their salvation!** He doesn't say that you're not acting like a Christian so you must not be saved, because Christians don't do these sorts of things.

Instead, he's saying that when you become sexually immoral as a believer, you're bringing the Holy Spirit with you into that sin. This by itself should give us an incentive to avoid sexual sin. But Paul never questions their salvation.

What Paul seems to be doing is taking over their theological starting point, namely, that they are "spiritual" because they have the Spirit, and redirecting it to include the sanctity of the body. The reality of the indwelling Spirit is now turned against them. They thought the presence of the Spirit meant a negation of the body; Paul argues the exact opposite: The presence of the Spirit in their present bodily existence is God's affirmation of the body. Contrary to what many teachers/pastors will tell you today, the Corinthians were not struggling with the first tense of salvation (justification), but with the second tense of

salvation (sanctification).