

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?

6:2 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?

6:3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life?

Based on Paul's previous argument that the church should judge those in the church, he moves from judging and expelling an immoral brother (5:1 ff.) to another form of judgment that involves litigation. In 6:1-11 Paul teaches believers the proper way to handle grievances against each other. Verse 7 gives the reason that Paul headed off in this direction with the theme of judgment; namely, because believers in the church were bringing lawsuits against each other. The problem is fairly easy to reconstruct. One brother had a grievance against another, but instead of turning to the church to arbitrate the problem, the one with the grievance has taken the other to a secular court to settle things. Just as the church does not judge those in the world, neither does it go to the world to have judgments settled. Paul is so astounded by such ungodliness that he does little to argue his point but instead moves from horror (vv. 1-6) to rhetorical questions (2-4, 5b-6, 7b) to sarcasm (5) and then to a threat (vv. 8-11) (Fee, 229).

In these verses Paul focuses the responsibility upon the church for allowing things to go the way that they have. Paul sees the church as a community that has an eschatological role in judgment that should be mirrored in this age.

This future role of judging is mentioned in Daniel 7:22 and states that judgment is given to the saints of the Most High (cf. Matt. 19:28; Lk. 22:30; Rev. 20:4). This is expanded upon by the fact that the believers' role in judgment will be so comprehensive that it will extend beyond people to unbelieving angels. If these things are so, then the things of this world are trivialized in light of the age that is to come.

In verse 1, Paul is shocked that a Christian would take another Christian to court. To do so dishonors both God and the church.

The pagan courts are called "unrighteous" because they are unbelievers, not because they were unjust in the way that they administered their own laws.

The reason for Paul's shock is expressed in a series of questions that express a biblical perspective of life; namely, that future realities are to affect our behavior now. If believers are given the responsibility to judge the world, they are in a better position than the unbeliever to determine what is just.

6:4 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?

Based on the premise that Christians play a key eschatological role as judges of the world, Paul draws his conclusion in relation to worldly courts.

No matter how trained in law, or how experienced the judges in a secular court may be, they are outside of the church which God has appointed to judge the world. No secular judge has that authority or position, so why would a believer go to them to settle things?

6:5 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,

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

Having said all this, Paul hopes that they will be ashamed for using secular courts. They should be ashamed of even having disputes!

The Corinthians had prided themselves in their wisdom. Paul now asks where all their wisdom went; from their behavior it appears that they didn't even have anyone wise enough among them to decide the simplest things; instead, they had to resort to unbelievers for help.

6:7 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?

By taking cases to secular courts the Christian is already defeated, for he has lost that which is most valuable - the character qualities of a Christian life. By airing the church's dirty laundry to unbelievers, he brings ridicule upon the church. Instead of exercising love, forgiveness, and reconciliation, the desire to "get what

he deserves" has become the driving force for the person's actions. The action is a lose/lose situation.

Matthew 5:39-42 could be used by Paul here as well.

6:8 On the contrary, you yourselves wrong and defraud. You do this even to your brethren.

Not only was there blatant immorality in the church, there was fraud. Some in the church were defrauding their brothers in order to satisfy their greed.

Paul had already said that the church was the temple of God (3:16); to defraud it is to desecrate the temple (3:17).

6:9 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,

6:10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.

The evil that was permitted in the church reminds Paul of a catalogue of sins that define the unrighteous, and the danger of tolerating sin. The immoral man and the one who is defrauding his brother are in danger of finding out that they will not inherit the Kingdom.

Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'" (Matt. 7:21-23)

People who confess to be believers but continue to have ungodly lifestyles deceive themselves into thinking that God is not serious about His moral demands. Paul reminds us not to be deceived in these things. Those who practice such things demonstrate that they do not possess eternal life.

Some people have difficulty with these verses believing that Paul must only be talking hypothetically since salvation is a work of God which cannot be lost. But a hypothetical threat is not a threat at all. Salvation can be viewed either from the inside out or from the outside in. True faith can be described in terms of the outward transforming work of God in the believer's life, or in terms of His inward work in the person's heart. Paul is not teaching salvation by works, but salvation that is transformational, changing the entire person inside out. Those who are sexually immoral (cf. 5:1-13), idolaters (8:1-11:1), adulterers (married people who have any type of sexual relationship outside of marriage), homosexuals, etc. demonstrate that they were not justified in the name of the Lord, for there is no evidence of sanctification. If external behavior had no bearing upon a saved person's life, Paul could not say "and such *were* some of you" (6:11); the implication of the past tense "were" is that change *had* taken place. Unchanged "Christians" are like the immoral "brother," they are best described as "so-called" Christians (I Cor. 5:11, cf. 8:5; Eph. 2:11; II Thess. 2:4), for the reality of their salvation is not evident in their behavior.

"Kingdom of God" should not simply be reduced to mean heaven. Throughout the OT it refers to the state of blessedness that will be ushered in by the return of Messiah. This state will then blend into eternity when God creates a new heaven and earth in which all evil will be barred from entering (Rev. 21:1-8; 22:14-15 - but also see note on 4:20).

6:11 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.

Although Paul is harsh in his assessment of the church, he did see transformation that took place among the believers there. He confidently asserts, "Such were some of you." Note the past tense. What they once were is no longer true of them in their saved state. Sin is no longer the dominant characteristic of their lives. Though at times they may falter, in their hearts they hate sin and wish to be freed from it.

At one time the Corinthian believers indulged in ungodliness because they were ungodly, but this is no longer true of them. They have been washed, sanctified, and justified. All of these verbs express salvation in different ways and all three actions are correctly translated in the passive voice in English indicating

that each work was done *to* the believer, not *by* the believer. In other words, Christians do not wash themselves; God washes us (the filth of our former lives has been removed - cf. Zech. 3:2-7; cf. Harrison for the explanation of how this verb, which is really a middle voice in Greek, has a passive meaning, 141). We do nothing to be justified - He justified us (i.e. He declares us righteous). We do not bring about our own sanctification - we are sanctified by Him (He sets us apart and has claimed us as His holy people - Harrison, 142). God has removed us from among the wicked who will not inherit the Kingdom of God. The Paschal lamb (Christ) has been slain for us (5:7). Because of what God has done, the possibility of new life has been opened. As people of God, we are to live in harmony with what we are. Let the old leaven be purged from the house (5:7) and the celebration begin! (5:8)

The Trinitarian elements are also obvious in these verses - salvation involves the work of God, Christ, and the Spirit.

"For Paul there is to be the closest possible relationship between the experience of grace and one's behavior that evidences that experience of grace. Paul himself is as concerned as anyone that the latter (right behavior) should not be perceived as coming first or as leading to the former (the experience of grace). But those who concern themselves with grace without equal concern for behavior have missed Paul's own theological urgencies. It is precisely for these reasons that the warning texts in Paul must be taken with real seriousness. Security in Christ there is, to be sure, but it is false security that would justify sinners who have never taken seriously 'but such *were* some of you.' That is to whitewash the sinner without regeneration or transformation; Paul simply would not understand such theology." (Fee, 248)

6:12 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.

"This section demonstrates, once again, the inseparability of Christian identity and lifestyle, or of theology and ethics." (Thiselton, 458)

"All things are lawful for me" is generally believed to be a saying that was circulating in the church in Corinth that expressed the Corinthians' theology. It was a motto that justified the abuse of Christian freedom and gave them freedom of conscience to sin.

Of course, Paul also believed in freedom in Christ (all things are lawful to me), namely, that the Christian is no longer bound by the law but has been set free from it by Christ. Nevertheless, he limits Christian freedom in two ways:

(1) "It is a well-known paradox that if *everyone* claims unqualified autonomy, *no one* can be free, for everyone is threatened by the freedoms of the other" (Thiselton, 461). Paul changes the starting point from "what is permissible" to "what is helpful." Freedom is not freedom for self's sake, but it is to be used for others. I may have the right to do something but if my action doesn't help those around me it is a misuse of freedom. Only actions that come from love are expedient for a believer.

(2) Secondly, it is very possible that someone who is exercising their freedom is in reality enslaved by their actions or involved in sin. Like the alcoholic who refuses to admit he has a problem, Christians are masters at self-deception, and Christian freedom can simply be the guise that hides addictive or sinful behavior. The Corinthians have changed their freedom into license which is totally inappropriate.

Gnosticism was fairly well developed at the end of the second century and its adherents believed in a dualism between the physical and spiritual worlds. Things done in the body didn't really matter, for the body was not related to the spirit or life in the spirit. This pushed Gnostics in one of two directions - asceticism or libertinism (Harrison, 144-145). Although the Corinthians were not Gnostics (for that sect did not come along until later) they had the same mindset.

6:13 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.

6:14 Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power.

At first glance, verses 13 and 14 seem to be an abrupt change in subject but in reality form part of a detailed argument.

The church in Corinth had allowed immorality to exist in its midst (5:1 ff.). Paul had argued that they were changed people (6:9-11) and that they needed to live in accordance with who they were. Although they had freedom in Christ, it was

not freedom to sin or freedom to find self-gratification (6:12) but was a freedom controlled by love.

Having clarified what freedom in Christ entails, Paul backs up to a place where he is in agreement with the Corinthians. Paul agrees with their understanding that dietary restrictions (as practiced by the Jews) were things that belonged to the present age and were not obligatory to keep. Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but since God will do away with them both when we die, they are of relatively little importance. There is a good reason not to be bound by these things. But this same principle cannot be applied to all bodily desires.

Paul is arguing against faulty logic. The Corinthians had assumed that all desires of the flesh are alike. They figured that whatever enters the stomach will simply be digested and that eventually the body, including the stomach, will return to dust. God ordained both the process of digestion and the dissolution of the body at death. Therefore, they correctly concluded that they had the freedom to eat anything (cf. Mk. 7:19). However, their next step of logic was flawed. They reasoned that sex and the body hold the same relationship to each other as food and the stomach do. "If I can gratify one body appetite, why may I not gratify another?" (Robertson, 124) Since sex will someday end and the body will return to dust, they concluded that they were free to use the body for immorality as well. But Paul says that the body is more than animal tissue. The body is for the Lord (i.e. for His use and service - Ro. 6:12-13, 19; 12:1) not for sensual pleasures.

Paul explains how the body is for the Lord in verse 14 and verses 19-20: it will be raised as Christ was raised (14b), it is the temple of the Holy Spirit (19), and it has been purchased by Christ and is his possession to use for His purposes (20).

The second part of the verse "the Lord is for the body" is not as easy to understand. Harrison suggests that this means that the Lord has given Himself for the believer and the two are permanently united (6:15-17). The believer's body will be raised from the dead just as Jesus was.

6:15 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!

When the Bible talks about being members of the body of Christ, it is not referring to having membership in an organization, it is talking about being a body part - like a limb, (an extremity, appendage) or an organ, or ears, or a mouth. Just as our physical body has members, by analogy, so does the spiritual body of Christ (I Cor. 12).

There is an organic unity that exists among believers. What is true of the individual is true of the whole. Every Christian is joined to Christ, as is the church (1 Cor. 6:15; Eph. 5:30; Col. 1:28; Eph. 5:22-23; 2Cor. 11:2).

Individually, a Christian is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Cor. 5:1); so is the church (1 Cor. 3:16 "you" is plural - referring to the group). The temple in the Old Testament was the holy dwelling of God. Now with the presence of the Holy Spirit in us, we are His holy dwelling. Therefore, when an individual sins, the body of Christ is defiled.

Paul's argument is that since we are members of Christ's body (the church), our sins are more than self-polluting. The hand that steals doesn't just defile itself, it defiles the whole man. In this case, an individual's sin with a prostitute isn't only a personal offense against God; it damages the body of Christ as well. I do not act independently; I act as part of the whole . . . even when I sin.

In a similar way, Paul said that divisions among the saints imply that Christ can be divided (1 Cor. 1:13). His reasoning is based on the unity of believers as the body of Christ. Divisions among individuals shouldn't exist because they are tantamount to dividing Christ - and a divided body is not a body at all.

In America, we commonly think that Christianity is strictly a personal relationship between me and God: my sins don't hurt anyone but me and being actively involved in a church is a matter of choice. Nothing could be further from the truth! Christianity is NOT just me and God, my sins DO affect others, and my lack of involvement is in reality a lack of stewardship of the grace that God has given to me

6:16 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."

In verse 16 Paul explains how we who are one in Christ (v.15) can become one with a prostitute and "He brings out more fully the greatness of the injury that is done to Christ by the man that has intercourse with an harlot; for he becomes one body, and hence he tears away a member from Christ's body." (Calvin commentary on I Corinthians).

"The two shall become one flesh" is a quote from *Genesis 2:24*. In *Genesis* many rightly understand "become one flesh" to include being unified mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually, as well as knit together by love and mutual respect. Paul only focuses on the physical aspect of this union.

Sexual immorality is more than having sex with another person. It involves a physical union with them that is to be reserved for marriage only. Having sex outside of marriage does not mean the couple is married but that they are illicitly taking from another what does not belong to them.

"The expression, therefore, that they two become one flesh, is applicable in the true and proper sense to married persons only; but it is applied to fornicators, who are joined in a polluted and impure fellowship, meaning that contagion [*i.e. pollution*] passes from the one to the other. For there is no absurdity in saying that fornication bears some resemblance to the sacred connection of marriage, as being a corruption of it, as I have said; but the former has a curse upon it, and the other a blessing." (Calvin, *Commentary on I Corinthians*)

6:17 But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.

The permanent and complete union between Christ and the believer is like that of marriage. Just as our bodies are only to be given to our spouses (chapt. 7) so are they to be solely reserved for Christ. Physical immorality defiles the holy union of the husband and wife, so the sin of immorality defiles the union between God and His people. In verse 17 this union is expressed as being joined in one spirit with Christ. Romans 6-8 speak much of this union and the implications for Christian living.

Perhaps the main idea of verses 15-17 can be summarized as follows: Christians are joined to Christ in the same way that a married couple becomes one in marriage. In human relationships this oneness is expressed through sexual intimacy. To share sexual intimacy with anyone other than one's spouse is illicitly taking from someone what belongs only to that person - whether this happens

before or after marriage. In the same way, immorality is a sin that is a breach of the relationship we have with Christ, and defiles the whole body as well (the church as a whole).

6:18 Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.

6:19 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?

6:20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

The Christian should run from fornication, not dispute about it or ponder it.

A distinction is made between fornication and other sins. Every other sin, Paul says, is outside the body. Some may say that gluttony, drunkenness and self-mutilation are also sins against the body so Paul isn't completely accurate, but that is to miss Paul's point. Paul is not writing a textbook of morality, he is emphasizing the nature of sexual sin. In the same way, the list of vices in 6:10 are not intended to be an all-inclusive list of what sins prevent one from entering the Kingdom, neither are Paul's comments here intended to include every sin one can commit against his own body. . Rather, Paul's point is that the body has an eternal destiny (v. 14) and will be raised from the dead by God, and fornication leaves a stain on the body that other sins "outside" the body do not. Fornication is a sin against God, our bodies, and the other person. It is using the body directly for the pleasure received in it. If we have been joined to Christ our bodies are not our own. A transfer of ownership has taken place.

Christ has purchased us from our enslavement to sin and delivered us from the punishment of sin by substituting His own life for ours (i.e we have been bought with a price; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Acts 20:28; Heb. 9:15; I Pet. 1:18; Rev. 5:9-10, etc.). Christians have been rescued from the powers which aimed to subjugate them and isolate them from the life of God (Ro. 6:17-18) (TDNT II, 275). This is the basic idea behind the word "redemption". When a slave was on the market he was placed on the block and auctioned off to the highest bidder. Once purchased, the slave served his new owner. To redeem means to buy or purchase. When Christ redeemed us, He purchased us off of the trading floor when we were slaves to sin and made us His own (I Pet. 1:18). We have become His possession and are under

His care. We have become slaves of Christ and have been redeemed from law (Gal. 3:13; 4:5), and the flesh (Ro. 8:23).

Being a servant (or slave) of Christ doesn't imply an unwilling attachment to a master but describes the realization that Christ has purchased us, the joy of knowing that we are His, and the pleasure of doing His will. This new freedom is not autonomy, but expresses itself in obedience, the goal of redemption. Redemption results in righteousness (Ro. 9:16), holiness (I Thess. 3:13), and newness of life (Ro. 6:4).

We have also become the Temple of God where the Spirit Himself resides (the same imagery was used of the church in 3:16). To use our bodies for immorality, or for that matter as a vehicle for any sin, is to desecrate the temple where God Himself dwells. We have become Christ's property and should not become joined to another.

The glory of God resides in His temple (us) and we should glorify Him in it.

The application to the church is important in a society where immortality is rationalized and justified in every conceivable way. The primary reason to stay away from sexual immorality is not because someone may contract a sexually transmitted disease or become pregnant. The primary reason is because our bodies do not belong to us. They have been purchased by Christ and are to be used by Him as an instrument of righteousness. They are to be treated as His temple.