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# 1 Corinthians

**Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren? 1 Corinthians 6:5**

The irony abounds. Paul has been speaking to those in Corinth who would allow believers within the congregation to carry out lawsuits against one another in pagan tribunals. His words have shown that it is not only inappropriate, but it makes no sense based on their positions in Christ. He now says, "I say this to your shame." They have disgraced themselves over this matter and his words anticipated them feeling the disgrace because of it.

And then comes the ironic question - "Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren?" It is to this same group that he has now written 5 full chapters of doctrine based on their "divisions" of allegiance. In chapter 4, he said this to them -

*"We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but we are dishonored!" 1 Corinthians 4:10*

How can it be that they are "wise in Christ" and yet they cannot make simple decisions concerning matters of dispute between believers? It is a scathing rebuke on the wisdom they feel they possess when in fact they are demonstrating none at all! His letter is intended for them to think these things through. Line after line is one which asks them (and thus us) to consider rationally our position in Christ and then to act in a manner according to that high status.

But,,,, it is so much easier to watch a movie or sit in the lawn and gaze at the birds as they flit about. This book is our guide, it is our "constitution" for living, and it is that which reveals our Lord. We should pick it up, read it, and cherish its words each day.

Life application: When someone says, "There are many ways to interpret the Bible" they are indicating that man holds sway over what God intends. In fact, there is one proper way to evaluate the Bible, but every one of us fails to do so to some degree or another. Our failure in no way negates what God determines. It shows that we need to study more.

### **But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers!**

1 Corinthians 6:6

In the previous verse, Paul asked this question: "I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren?"

Verse 6:6 is not a continuation of the question, but rather a reply to it. It is a rebuke that there "is not a wise man among you, not even one..." Instead of displaying wisdom (which will someday be used even to judge the angels), he notes that "brother goes to law against brother." Instead of this, they should be willing to sit down and responsibly work out their differences among each other, not even involving the church for mediation.

Rather than this though, they not only fail to settle their differences, they were skipping right over the church for mediation and going directly to civil trial where judgment was rendered "before unbelievers." It was an utter failing of their position in Christ and the knowledge, fraternity, and faith that they should have exhibited.

Albert Barnes notes that according to Flavius Josephus, "the Romans (who were now masters of Corinth) permitted the Jews in foreign countries to decide private affairs, where nothing capital was in question, among themselves." How could it be that if they had this right, that they wouldn't exercise it? They were considered a sect of Judaism at this time (see the dispute which arises in Acts 18 and the judgment rendered by the proconsul in Acts 18:14 concerning this) and so they had the legal right to mediate many such private affairs.

Remembering that 1 Corinthians is included in the Bible, it is a prescriptive letter from Paul explaining our responsibilities within the church during the church age. We should consider how to act in similar matters based on his words here and abide by them.

Life application: Of what true value is it to gain the upper hand in petty matters which arise between believers that we would violate the words of Scripture in order to bring suit against our brethren in the church? Looking at these things from the eternal perspective, it is better to let go of such offenses than it is to bring discredit upon ourselves as believers and, more importantly, the name of Jesus.

**Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather *let yourselves be cheated?* 1 Corinthians 6:7**

"Utter failure" is well translated here. Paul is telling those in Corinth that their lawsuits against one another demonstrate that they have missed the mark in Christian fellowship and in maintaining a sense of fraternity within the faith. It is true that when one sues another, it is generally because a wrong has been committed. Suppose someone lends \$5000 to another believer. When it isn't paid back, the normal and expected course of action would be to go to them and attempt to get the money back. When that fails, a suit might be the next logical step to follow.

However, Paul is saying that doing this is contrary to what should be expected of a Christian, especially if the suit is conducted in non-Christian mediation. Paul says that instead, "Why do you not rather accept wrong?" And then to further that word, he repeats the thought to confirm what he meant - "Why do you not rather *let yourselves* be cheated?" It seems contrary to the normal order of business because it *is* contrary to the normal order of business. Something more noble is expected of those within the faith.

We may suffer from being cheated, but God is not unaware of it. Our faithfulness to His precept will be rewarded in due time. He will handle all wrongs and correct all offenses, either in this life or in the true life which is to come, but He is asking us to stand on the principles He has laid down.

Having noted this, the passage makes no commentary on interactions with non-believers, governmental agencies, corporations, or the like. When harm is suffered at the hands of a non-believer, there are venues for handling such things.

Life application: How difficult it can be to set aside grievances that have been levied against us by other believers. But how much more satisfying should it be to know that we are following the wishes of the Lord by doing so! Let us stand firmly on God's word and not be weakened in our determination to be obedient to the knowledge we possess; mixing in practice to what we have learned.

*Lord, my brother has offended me*

*But You have said that I should let it go*

*Is it not better that I be wronged*

*Than to take him to court for all the world to know?*

*Surely the offense has me upset as You can see*

*But in the end Your word is my rule and guide*

*Should I consider my offence more important?*

*Should I so lift myself up and be filled with pride?*

*Rather, I will stand upon my guide, Your written word*

*And thus be obedient to You, my precious Lord*

**No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and *you do* these things to your brethren! 1 Corinthians 6:8**

This verse should be looked at in connection with the previous verse for a full understanding of what Paul is relaying -

"Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather *let yourselves* be cheated? No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and *you do* these things to your brethren!"

He had just asked them why wouldn't they accept wrong and even be cheated instead of going to law against one another. In his written words, it is as if he were speaking without giving them time to even explain themselves because their actions were inexcusable. And so he continues with the same thought, stating a fact that they cannot ignore - "No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat."

They are in essence caught with their hands in the cookie jar. He has identified openly that their actions are harmful and wrong towards one another. There is a root of bitterness between the believers which has been allowed to enter into the congregation. It is something that is warned against in Hebrews 12 -

"Pursue peace with all *people*, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of

bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled..."  
Hebrews 12:14, 15

This "root of bitterness" is explicitly stated by Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians as something which should not be allowed. Here are his words to them -

"...no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord *is* the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified." 1 Thessalonians 4:6

The fact that they were cheating and doing wrong is bad enough, but what was more vile to him is that "*you do these things to your brethren!*" If this is how they were treating one another, then how much more disgraceful must be their actions to those who weren't considered as brothers! It is the Lord Jesus they represent. And yet because of the things they were doing, those outside the church would certainly be inclined to say, "I want no part of that religion."

Life application: Would you apply for a job in a company that was known for employees cheating one another and suing one another? Would you willingly join such a company, knowing in advance that there was nothing but infighting and division? Of course not! If this is the case with work, how much more do you think people will reject coming to Christ if they go into a church and see nothing but the same between believers. Our actions in church have real significance to the eyes of those who come in seeking answers to their questions about the Lord.

**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 homosexuals, nor sodomites,....** 1 Corinthians 6:9

Paul is going to make a sobering list of those who "will not inherit the kingdom of God." He makes his statement in the form of a rhetorical question, and it has the

full force of a positive declaration - these people will in fact "not inherit the kingdom of God."

This is a most unpopular view in the world in which we live and it is one of the reasons why Paul is rejected by many aberrant pastors, priests, and preachers today as they utter sermons which do not consider the whole counsel of God. But his words are true and whether we want to believe them or not is irrelevant. The only thing that matters is what God has determined.

And so he begins his list in this verse and it will continue through verse 10. All of the following categories are termed "unrighteous." That word is used for the whole list which is then presented. It is these unrighteous who will not inherit God's kingdom. And to make sure we are clear on the subject, he interjects words of warning, "Do not be deceived." It is his way of saying that others may attempt to diminish, twist, or reject this truth concerning these people, but that doesn't change the truth of the matter.

The term here for "unrighteous" was just used in verse 6:1 when speaking of those in the pagan world to whom the Corinthians were going to for their judgments. Paul is showing the illogical nature of this. Why would someone go to "the unrighteous" when they are not in that category? He is attempting to have them think this issue through. And so he presents his list -

Fornicators - This includes all sexual impurity. There is a place for sex and it is within the confines of marriage. But there are those who reject this and exercise their sexual desires outside of those confines. Marriage from a biblical standpoint is between a male and a female. Within the confines of those two precepts - marriage, and the union of a man and woman - sex is acceptable.

Idolaters - As noted in 1 Corinthians 5:10, an idolater is one who puts anything or anyone before a right relationship with God. It can be a mere devotion or service to idols, such as is authorized by some wayward Christian denominations. It can be realized in prayers to or through any other person - such as praying to Mary or

the saints. People can make almost anything into an idol - sex, money, gems, artwork, cars, sport teams or sports figures, etc. Idolatry includes the unhealthy devotion to anything or anyone which causes our hearts and affections to be directed away from God.

Adulterers - This concerns those who break their covenant of marriage and engage in sexual relations outside of those bonds. An adulterer can be a married person having sex with someone not their spouse, or it can be an unmarried person who is having sex with a married person. From a biblical perspective, both are adulterers.

Homosexuals - The Greek word here is *malakoi* which indicates "softness" or being effeminate. This is the trademark of many homosexuals and so it is translated that way here. But many scholars indicate that it includes a broader and darker range of sin. It is a person who is weak in their moral convictions to the point where any perversion is tolerated and accepted.

Sodomites - The Greek word is *arsenokoites*. It denotes a male engaging in same-gender sexual activity; specifically a man in bed with another man and thus homosexuality.

Paul's list will continue in the following verse. It is to these categories of unrepentant sinners that there is no hope of entering the kingdom of God. The modern argument that a person "is born" this way is irrelevant. A person may be born with a predilection towards drinking, but this does not mean they need to be a drunk. And whether a person is born with a bent towards some type of sexual perversion, like homosexuality, or not is irrelevant. They have been instructed that this is wickedness. They alone will bear the consequences of their actions.

Life application: Whether we like what the Bible teaches on difficult moral issues or not is beside the point. The only thing that matters is that we accept God's sovereignty and act in accord with His directives.



**...nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. 1 Corinthians 6:10**

Continuing with his sobering list of the unrighteous, Paul next names -

**Thieves** - The meaning is clear in any society. It refers to anyone who lays hold of something which belongs to another and takes it for themselves. Robbery, stealing, pick pocketing, etc are simply different ways of describing the overall concept of thievery. And this can be on a personal, an institutional, or a governmental level. Companies can steal from their employees as much as employees can steal from their companies. And governments can, and do, steal from their citizens through unjust taxation. Those behind these schemes are not guiltless.

**Covetous** - Coveting, as described in the analysis of 1 Corinthians 5:10, is desiring something that someone else possesses. It is the greed of the heart which is not content with what one rightfully owns. It also doesn't consider taking the time to earn what is desired. Instead it is a lust of the eyes for that which one has not been worked for or which has been rightly received, such as a gift or inheritance. It is an avaricious attitude which will eventually be realized in hatred, theft, murder, etc. if not reigned in.

**Drunkards** - These were described in 1 Corinthians 5:11. A drunkard is a person addicted to, and consumed by, alcohol; not specifically any person who drinks alcohol. A drunkard has no restraint over his drinking; it has conquered him and his allegiance is to it and not to Christ. Concerning the moderate drinking of alcohol, there is nothing wrong with doing so despite the stigma many un-biblically attach to it. The entire body of Scripture bears this out. However, like any other thing, there are limits which must be exercised.

**Revilers** - Again, as noted in 1 Corinthians 5:11, this is a person who is vulgar in his words. His speech is coarse, angry, defiant, and abusive. Such a person has no problem vilifying others in their character, hurting people's feelings through

speech, and demeaning those around them. Such an attitude is opposite to Christ who "when He was reviled, did not revile in return" (1 Peter 2:23).

Extortioners - This final category was described in 1 Corinthians 5:10. Such are those who take advantage of others for illicit gain. They may charge high rates of repayment on loans, forced payment for "protection" which if not paid will end in any sort of punishment, etc. In this type, there is little consideration for others, but rather a rapacious desire to profit off anyone for any reason.

The Bible now states, in completely clear terms that all of the categories listed in 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10 will not inherit the kingdom of God. It is easy to look at the list and say, "I haven't done that one or that one," but in the end, all have committed at least one and certainly more than one of each offense listed. In other words, we are all guilty and stand condemned before God. As Paul says in Romans 3:10, "There is none righteous, no, not one."

No person is justified in and of themselves before God and all people are "condemned already" according to Jesus' words in John 3:18. What we need to be right before God cannot be found within ourselves. Paul will keep on to showing this as he continues with his epistle. We disregard his words at our own peril.

Life application: Who can point a finger at one of the people on this sobering list without condemning themselves. There is nothing wrong with making right moral judgments, but there is a problem with doing so before first getting right with God through Jesus Christ. Once that occurs, we stand in a position where we can identify evil in others and lead them to the Fountain of cleansing, which is Christ.

**And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.**

1 Corinthians 6:11

Referring to his list of those who will not inherit the kingdom of God, Paul now shows the immensity of the work of Christ, even for people who have committed such acts against Him as were mentioned in the previous two verses. He begins with, "And such were some of you." Pick from the wicked things on this list and it may have indeed applied to any of those in Corinth. And thus, the same thought gives hope to such offenders today.

But without understanding the nature of sin, its hard to contemplate exactly what this means for each and every person in Christ. James says that "...whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one *point*, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). Paul is taking the most notorious offenses and highlighting them, but James shows that any infraction of God's law breaks the entire law, and thus we are all condemned before God. Because of this, looking down on another for whatever their sin was must be excluded.

Next Paul says, "But you were washed." Jamieson-Fausset-Brown states, "The Greek middle voice expresses, 'Ye have had yourselves washed.'" The tense here varies from the next two points that Paul will make, and this is not by accident. It is showing that receiving the Holy Spirit is something that must be accomplished by us through an act of faith.

We are not "regenerated in order to believe" as reformed theologians claim. The Bible, time and again, shows that we must receive Christ voluntarily; this verse shows that to be true. The Pulpit Commentary notes that, "The very object of Christ's death had been that he might cleanse his Church "by the washing of water by the Word." Therefore, receiving Jesus is not "a work" that merits something, but rather it is the necessary action that we must take in order to receive the gift.

In the receiving of His work, we wash ourselves by the Spirit. This then leads to Paul's next two points which say, "but you were sanctified, but you were justified." The normal order of these two points is reversed. According to Paul in Romans we are "justified" and then we go through the process of "sanctification." However, this is not speaking about the progressive sanctification that occurs in a

believer's life. Instead, it is the "setting apart" or "consecrating" of the individual to God. It is a done deal.

Despite the state of maturity (all new believers are immature) and despite the lack of knowledge about Godly things (in which most new believers are deficient), they have been set apart by God as sanctified. This is a clear indication of the doctrine of eternal salvation. What God has sanctified is forever so.

A point of note in Paul's words is that the word "*alla*" or "but" is repeated for each of these points. In this, it indicates a special emphasis on each part of the process; the words can be taken as emphatic. You "have washed yourselves;" you "are sanctified;" and you "are justified." And, it was done "in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."

Salvation is accomplished "in the name of the Lord Jesus" and by no other. Only He came in the flesh to redeem us from our sins and to purify us with His shed blood. Nobody, outside of His bestowed grace, can be saved. And the action is accomplished "by the Spirit of our God." The Holy Spirit is the one who performs the actions when a believer calls out to the Lord. The moment they do, they are sealed with the Spirit (Ephesians 1:13, 14), and are given the guarantee of eternal life. They are sanctified in Christ, and they are justified in Christ.

Albert Barnes notes that, "This verse brings in the whole subject of redemption, and states in a most emphatic manner the various stages by which a sinner is saved, and by this single passage, a man may obtain all the essential knowledge of the plan of salvation." When one bears the weight of sin committed after coming to Christ and feels that they may have lost what they once received, all they need to do is return to this verse and contemplate it. It contains that wonderful assurance that we are saved despite ourselves.

Life application: This verse asks us to look back on who we once were and to conduct our futures with humility, gratitude, and to carry in our hearts deep

thankfulness for the grace and mercy of God who took what was ignoble and purified it for Himself.

**All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.**

1 Corinthians 6:12

In what seems a dramatic shift to another subject, Paul begins today with, "All things are lawful for me..." He will go on to speak about foods in another verse, and so it seems that he is referring to something newly introduced. But then he will return to the subject of sexual immorality, demonstrating that he hasn't really changed course at all. He has been speaking about this issue already and is merely taking another approach to help the issue sink in.

Therefore, when he says "All things are lawful for me..," it is speaking in a general sense, not literally that "all" things are lawful. In other words, "sex" is lawful, but "sexual immorality" is not. He will introduce "foods" in order to get us to think on a different level concerning this. From his previous comments in this epistle, it is completely inescapable that committing acts of a perverse sexual nature are forbidden. He has already shown that to be true. And so he continues. Yes, "all things are lawful, but all things are not helpful."

In this, Paul is speaking of "license." What are we free to do in Christ, and how can we misuse that freedom which actually turns into bondage? And so again, he states, "All things are lawful..." He is emphasizing the matter to capture our full attention and to ensure that we understand what he is desperately trying to tell the Corinthians (and thus us as well who are reading his words).

Yes, "all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." God created sex (which we are using as an example of a general principle) and therefore it must be "good." But we can abuse what God has given to the point where it is no longer "good." This takes us down several paths. Sex is

normally lawful, but inappropriate sex is not helpful. If it is not helpful, then it is harmful. There is a self destructive nature to inappropriate sex.

Likewise, sex is normally lawful, but we can be brought under the power of inappropriate sex and become enslaved by it. If we are enslaved by it, we are no longer serving the Master who bought us and "sanctified" and "justified" us as was noted in the previous verse. We are working contrary to what God has intended. The penalty for this has already been noted - to be expelled from the fellowship. This concept will be built on by Paul in the verses ahead. To understand what he is saying in this verse, the words of C.J. Ellicott will provide clarity -

"There is a verbal contrast in the Greek here which can scarcely be rendered fully in English. The Greek words for "unlawful" and "be brought under the power of" are cognate words. What the Apostle says is, 'All things are lawful for me, but I am not the one to allow them therefore to become a law over me.' There is such a thing as becoming the very slave of liberty itself. If we sacrifice the power of choice which is implied in the thought of liberty, we cease to be free; we are brought under the power of that which should be in our power."

Understanding this, we see that being brought under the power of something other than Christ is a return to bondage and therefore teaching, practicing, or allowing sinful license is contrary to the gospel. If it is contrary to the gospel, then it is not "of" the gospel and must be condemned. This is why Paul was so strict in his judgment against the sexually immoral sinner in the previous chapter and it is why the church must continue to be strict in such judgments. There is but one gospel and it must not be polluted or corrupted.

Life application: Paul wrote his letters under inspiration of the Holy Spirit. What he says are, therefore, God's words, not just his. To reject what he has written is to reject what God expects. Stand fast on the truth of the gospel and the need for purity and holiness within the church.

**Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body *is* not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 1 Corinthians 6:13**

In his usual way of making exceptionally complex matters easier to understand, Paul now introduces "food" as a way of grasping the immensely more important issue of sexual immorality. However, in what is always the case, Paul's words are often twisted (see 2 Peter 3:14-16) to mean something entirely different than what he intends.

By introducing foods, as an understandable baseline, he is showing that they are an indifferent matter which we participate in, even the eating of food sacrificed to idols. This is a matter he will speak about in detail in 1 Corinthians 8 and elsewhere. Foods affect the physical man and have no lasting value other than to sustain a person until the next meal. The eating of foods is a morally neutral matter.

God made foods and foods are "for the stomach." Likewise, God created man, including his stomach and the stomach is intended "for foods." In the end, both are material, non-moral, and perishing. And so, "God will destroy both it and them" meaning "the stomach and the foods." On the other hand, there is sexual immorality. It is an entirely different category and one which cannot, despite our greatest desires and our greatest efforts to twist what He intends, be treated as we treat foods.

Sexual immorality is a moral issue. It cannot be separated from this state. We cannot rationalize it away, we cannot make excuses, we cannot compare it to any other issues of a non-moral or wrongly imposed moral issue. It is wrong in and of itself. Further, though different types of sexual immorality are mentioned by Paul and others, they all fall into one over-arching category and must be considered in that way.

Engaging in sexual immorality affects not a merely perishing organ, but it affects the man as a whole - body and soul. Man is not granted the authority to engage in this type of act because the moral nature and effect of sexual immorality doesn't cease to affect the man at his death like eating various foods does. Instead, it is carried with him to his judgment, be it before Christ at the Bema Seat, or before the Lord at the Great White Throne. It is an offense against God, eating foods is not.

Further, eating foods will not lead others to commit sin, sexual immorality will. Eating foods will not turn a church from the Lord, sexual immorality will. Foods are neutral, sexual immorality is morally wrong.

Life application: Concerning sexual immorality, what we treat in a flippant manner, or what we try to hide through twisting of a precept or in the diminishing of the highly moral nature of such an act, doesn't change the force of the offense in God's sight. Just because we attempt to rationalize away our moral offenses by comparing them with other non-moral or inappropriately-mandated moral offenses, it in no way changes the severity of our actions. God is, in fact, God. We are His and we will stand judged by Him, not excused by our attempts to undermine what He has ordained.