

20260315 1 Corinthians 6 – Staying within the Lines

I drive a 2022 Toyota Prius, and it has an amazing feature. As I drive down any road, whenever I go too far to the left center lane, it beeps and causes the car to turn slightly to the right. When I drift to the right, the car beeps and gently nudges me back into my lane. This feature attempts to keep me within the safety guidelines. If I cross over the center line and don't make adjustments, I am in danger of a head-on crash. If I cross over the right line, I will end up in the bar ditch and wreck my car. The only safe place for me to be is somewhere between the two lines. The Holy Spirit of God does a similar thing in the life of each and every believer as we navigate the twists and turns of life. When you came to Christ, you received the Holy Spirit. He lives within you, giving you plenty of latitude within which you can drive. But if you get too far to one side or the other, He will warn you and try to push you back to where you belong.

In this chapter, Paul is defining the direction the Corinthian believers needed to take. They were getting off the main path and out into some places that were destructive to them personally as well as to the Corinthian church. This is a chapter about staying within the lines; these are the safe boundaries of living out the Christian life.

I have always avoided teaching 1 and 2 Corinthians because they raise several thorny issues. But it has been sheer joy. It tackles so many questions that are relevant today. In this study, we'll cover a few more of these issues. In 1 Corinthians 4 and 5, Paul warned the church that their ignorance and arrogance had become like leaven. He told them that a little leaven would take hold and ruin the whole loaf. Paul now continues pointing out the sin in the lives of the members of the Corinthian church.

Paul begins by highlighting that some of the Corinthian believers were suing their brothers and sisters in Christ. This grieved Paul, and he admonished them against doing this. Paul doesn't deny the need to settle differences in court or otherwise. Sometimes differences between believers need to be settled formally when they can't be resolved informally. Paul points out a better way than running to the courthouse. Remember that Moses himself was set up as a judge of the people back in Egypt. His father-in-law, Jethro, took his advice and set up a court system. There is a place for taking people to court, but when dealing with a fellow believer, we should look differently than the world. Paul begins.

Do Not Sue the Brethren

6 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? 2 Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? 3 Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? 4 If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge? 5 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? 6 But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers! (1 Corinthians 6:1-6, NKJV).

V. 1 Paul is shocked that these believers were taking one another to court. He's not talking about criminal law in which the state comes against a perpetrator; rather, he's addressing one believer suing another. These kinds of things happen all the time. Just recently, two brothers in Christ came to me to help resolve an issue. A contractor friend of mine, a believer, refused to pay a plumber who is also a believer, so they came to me. They did that because of what is at the end of verse one, which states "to bring the dispute before the saints." This is the idea of Christian mediation.

Let me explain a little bit about the law back in Greece. The cases were heard in the marketplace, which was entirely public. The Greeks listened to the case as a form of entertainment. I guess it was the ancient equivalent of these modern shows that come on TV, like Judge Judy. But what was going on is that this kind of behavior is contrary to the type of behavior that ought to characterize our lives. When the world watches us dealing with one another, the world should see something very different. Remember what Jesus said would show the world that we are Christians? It isn't the number of verses we can quote, but how we will treat each other when differences arise.



Jesus said the following: **35** *"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."* (John 13:35, NKJV).

Guys, the thing that distinguishes us from the world is our love for one another. The public display of our disagreements is destructive to the cause of Christ. It is injurious to the gospel. Paul points out that believers will end up ruling the world, so as believers, we ought to be able to rule in these matters among ourselves. Paul felt strongly that we, as believers, are family and that we should keep disputes out of court, resolving them according to the laws of God rather than the laws and guidelines of men.

Vv. 2-3 Paul adds that believers will have some role in the judgment of the world and the angels. I think we will be judges under Jesus during the Millennial Kingdom. Richardson talks about this in his book called "When a Jew Rules the World." Perhaps this means that we'll have a role in judging the fallen angels. Paul is saying that if God is going to allow us to take part in these sorts of things, we ought to be able to settle some of our differences while we're living out life here and now.

Vv. 4-5 Paul adds that we really don't have any business going and finding others to judge our disputes, as they are no more qualified than we are to settle our disputes. He adds that it's shameful that we feel the need to go and seek others to settle our disputes. We should be reluctant to take our disputes with fellow believers to those who have nothing to offer but the wisdom of the world. Those who can settle our disputes have God's wisdom and the wisdom to apply God's word to our problems.

V. 6 The idea of brothers going against brothers before unbelievers was unthinkable to Paul. This is the opposite of showing the world a faith that has transformed us from within and appears in how we treat one another.

7 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? 8 No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren! 9 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, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 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 6:7-11, NKJV).

V. 7 Paul said the fact that you've taken your brothers to court is, in itself, a demonstration of an utter failure. Our ability to get along and settle our differences is a testimony of our walk with Christ. Paul is saying that it's better to be wronged and not get full satisfaction than to sue one another in open court.

Vv. 8-10 Paul again is dressing them down, telling them that they're involved in some bad stuff. Our lives reflect what's going on spiritually inside us (which should reflect the gospel). Paul was willing to sacrifice materially and physically (beatings, etc.) for the integrity of the gospel. Paul continues the letter by listing the kinds of shameful, sinful things that are deeds of the flesh which are not who we are when we've come to know Christ. These are some of the sins that certain of them were involved in before they became Christians. Paul gives a laundry list of things that demonstrate a person's unbelief when they are: fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, covetous people, drunks, and revilers.

V. 11 And such WERE some of you. That is what they used to be, but that is not who and what they are now. He reminds them that they were washed, sanctified, and have a new identity in Christ. When we are tempted to give in to our old, sinful nature, we need to remember who we are in Christ. Living a degraded, sinful life is not who we are. It's not who you are. Paul is saying you should live out the new you that He has made you to be. When we come to Christ, we are not only sanctified but also justified. Understand this to mean that you and I were made clean before almighty God when we were washed in the blood of Jesus. This happened when we accepted Him as our Savior, and, through that act, we were justified. This means God could then look on you "just as if" you had never participated in the things that you did. We are washed clean and presentable to Jesus.

Paul is now going to move from lawsuits to sins of the body. The Corinthians liked to say the following phrase: "all things are lawful for me." It is true that we are no longer under the Mosaic Law, but we are to live according to the Spirit. This is what I mean by "walking between the lines." There are a lot of grey areas in life where the Bible doesn't specifically say what we're to do in those circumstances. This is when we lean and depend on the Holy Spirit by listening to His voice and living our lives accordingly. There is objective truth, but there are also some grey areas that

God sends us through in different ways. That's done by the direction of the Holy Spirit. This is because we have different strengths and weaknesses, and I think this is one reason our tests and trials differ from those of other believers. For me, there might be something I can engage in that would be very destructive or spiritually dangerous in the life of another believer. God takes us through different things. There are three principles introduced here as to why sometimes it's not good to do something, even though it's lawful.

Glorify God in Body and Spirit

12 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. 13 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 [pornea – any act or thought of a sexual nature outside of God's ordained purpose for a man or a woman – God created sexuality and He defines the confines of it] but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 14 And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. (1 Corinthians 6:12-14, NKJV with author's notes in brackets).

Paul is saying that: (1) not all things are helpful, (2) some things will enslave us, and (3) some things are temporal (temporary). (This means they don't have enough spiritual significance to merit our involvement in them.)

Paul perhaps speaks to the liberties the Corinthians were taking in their own lives. The Greeks sort of separated what they did with their bodies from what they believed spiritually. This is what they meant by the statement that food was made for the stomach and the stomach for food. The body was made for sex, and sex was made for the body. That's not a truthful philosophy or mindset for the believer. Paul is saying these have no eternal value. All of ourselves (body, soul, and mind) are being transformed into the image of Christ.

Vv. 12-14 The idea is not how these things benefit the believer, but how this affects others. We can't live our lives as if they don't affect those around us. We have to live in a way that is considerate of others. This includes: how we act in town, what we post on Facebook, and what we say and do in a local restaurant. We need to be careful, knowing that we are a reflection of what goes on in our church. Look at how it is expressed in the NASB: "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" (v.12). What you indulge in might lead to addiction to the point where you can't get free. This has become rampant in the United States, where there is an attitude of "I've got to get what will make me happy." We spend a lot of time chasing pleasure. But Paul makes a contrast when he talks about how our physical bodies are to be used. This is no longer a grey area, but a black-and-white one. Stay within those lines.

15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! 16 Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "the two," He says, "shall become one flesh." 17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. (1 Corinthians 6:15-17, NKJV).

As a culture, we've indulged ourselves to the point where we've become slaves. You can be a slave to righteousness or a slave to sin. Perhaps the Corinthians were still having trouble breaking away from temple prostitution and such. Perhaps some of them had become addicted to sex shows or something that would have been their form of pornography. When we come to Christ, there should be a major shift in the focus of our lives. This includes not only what we think with our minds, but what we do with our bodies. What is it that dominates our attention? Has your attention been hijacked by things that it shouldn't be?

God did not make our bodies for sexual immorality. They were created for procreation and sexual pleasure in the confines of God's purposes. This means one man with one woman for life. If you do what you weren't created to do, there will be horrible consequences. People who give themselves to multiple partners end up with sexually transmitted diseases. Why? Because you're using your body for something that it wasn't created to be used for. If you and your spouse operate within God's definition of sex, you'll never have any sexually related diseases. You will be safe and healthy. Your body wasn't made for promiscuity. When you operate within God's guidelines, you're operating in a way that pleases God and is healthy. When we operate within God's guidelines, we use our bodies as they were created, and there is great safety that comes with that.

Colossians 3:1-2 (ESV)

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

Paul reminds us that when we come to Christ, we join our bodies to Him. We are doing this in a real and spiritual way. If you're a temple of the Holy Spirit, you must not take that body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit and connect up with another person in a sexually immoral way. You're taking Him into whatever you're involved in. The same goes for what we watch. We're taking Jesus with us wherever we go. We mustn't join ourselves with immorality because we're taking Him with us since He's joined with us.

18 Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. (1 Corinthians 6:18-20, NKJV).

So, we're to flee sexual immorality. What does this mean? Think about Joseph, who fled the seduction of Potiphar's wife. He didn't sit and discuss it with her. He told her no, and he fled. We don't need to engage in long conversations with ourselves about sin. We are to know the limits of where we are to be and to stay within them. Our very bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. We shouldn't defile and desecrate the temple of Almighty God. Once you've put your faith in

Christ, your body is a sacred place. It is to be used for sacred purposes, and those sacred purposes include sexual fulfillment with and through your life partner. That's not just my way. That's God's way.

In summary, when we become believers, it should change not only our minds, but also be manifested in how we use our bodies. We should have minds that do not want to repay and seek retribution against a fellow believer. The verses tell us not to sue a fellow believer. This, of course, has its limits when that person who professes to be a Christian, acts in a horrible, unchristian way. But our first recourse should be to seek wisdom and godly counsel. Our bodies should be used for clean and upright purposes. This includes sexual gratification only with one's spouse for life. We should never be bed-hoppers with multiple partners. That is to take the temple of God and use it in immoral ways. You might have a past that didn't look like this. That's okay. God forgives all of that, but He calls you to something better, something more noble, something holy.

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.