

FIRST CORINTHIANS

Chapter 6

Introduction

The apostle Paul was a master at using metaphors to describe your relationship to Jesus Christ. By far one of his favorites was to call the church “the body of Christ.” When Jesus was on the earth as God in human flesh, He had a physical body through which He ministered to others. Jesus was crucified; His body was put in the tomb; three days later His body rose from the grave; forty days later His body ascended into heaven. So, His physical body is in heaven, seated at the right hand of God, poised and ready to return to the earth.

While He is in heaven, **Christians on the earth function as His body!** He is called the “head” of this body on the earth; each Christian is a “member” of His body on the earth.

The metaphor of the church as the body of Jesus Christ is very prominent in chapter six. In verse fifteen you see that the physical bodies of Christians are the members of Jesus Christ’s body on earth. In verses nineteen and twenty you see that each individual physical body of a Christian is inhabited by the Holy Spirit. In other words, all of us together are the body of Jesus Christ, and each of our bodies individually are inhabited by the Lord through His indwelling Holy Spirit.

Let me put it even more simply: *You are in the Lord’s body, and the Lord is in your body!*

That being the case, Paul can address two seemingly unrelated church problems at the same time. The Corinthians were suing one another in open court; and they were having sex with the harlots from the Temple of Aphrodite. The solution to both problems was to remember their relationship to the Lord as His body, and with the Lord in their bodies.

We'll organize our thoughts around these two points: #1 Since You Are In The Lord's Body, Don't Drag Him Into Court Against Your Brother, and #2 Since The Lord Is In Your Body, Don't Drag Him Into Bed With A Harlot.

#1 Since You Are In The Lord's Body,
Don't Drag Him Into Court Against Your Brother
(v1-11)

You've probably been told that it is wrong for a Christian to sue another Christian in open court. *You were told correctly!* That is exactly what Paul says in these verses.

1 Corinthians 6:1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints?

Paul considered it outrageous that Christians would look to the courts to settle their differences. It's not that the courts were immoral or corrupt. It's that lawsuits expose the church to the judgement of unbelievers. How can an unbeliever recommend the proper spiritual course of action? *He can't!* You should let Christians resolve your problems.

1 Corinthians 6:2 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?

1 Corinthians 6:3 Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?

Jesus has promised to return to earth. At His Second Coming, He will establish a one thousand year kingdom on the earth. In many passages of Scripture you are told that Christians – *you and I* – will rule and reign with Jesus! We will sit in judgement over the people who inhabit the kingdom, and over fallen angels. Since that is our future, it ought to be easy to judge the relatively “small matters” that “pertain to this life” we are currently living.

1 Corinthians 6:4 If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge?

1 Corinthians 6:5 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?

1 Corinthians 6:6 But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers!

“Things pertaining to this life” is a phrase that refers primarily to money and property.

If there is a dispute, you should “appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge,” rather than go to court. “Least esteemed” doesn’t mean you should appoint an immature believer. It’s a comparison. Normally we hold judges in high esteem. But even the least esteemed mature believer has wisdom that exceeds that of the most highly esteemed unbelieving judge.

Paul said that they should have been ashamed of themselves! They should instead submit themselves to other believers within the church.

1 Corinthians 6:7 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?

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

Before you disagree with Paul, remember what Jesus said about this same issue:

Matthew 5:38 “You have heard that it was said, ‘*An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.*’

Matthew 5:39 But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.

Matthew 5:40 If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have *your* cloak also.”

It is wrong to assert your rights if doing so will wrong others! You have the right to surrender your rights and “let yourself be cheated.” You should be less concerned with your rights and more concerned with your responsibilities and with reconciliation.

We’re not saying that you can never call the police or appear in court. God has ordained human government for your good. We are talking about lawsuits involving money and property. We’re talking about suing for divorce. We’re talking about issues that should be resolved within the church, by believers appointed to judge. We sometimes call it “arbitration” – submitting yourself to be bound by the judgment of an impartial third party who will hear your case or complaint and then render a judgment based on spiritual principles found in the Word of God.

In verses two and three Paul encouraged them to think about the future. In verses nine through eleven he encouraged them to think about the past:

1 Corinthians 6:9 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,

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

1 Corinthians 6:11 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.

The power of God had miraculously delivered them from the kinds of gross, enslaving sins that characterize the kingdom of this world. They were headed to a glorious future in which they would help Jesus rule His kingdom on earth. In the mean time they were saved to reflect the principles and priorities of the future kingdom. The church, and their behavior in it, should be a taste of the coming kingdom. Thus there was no place for lawsuits that demanded their rights. They had a responsibility to represent the Lord to the unbelieving world.

Think of it this way: Since we are all members of the body of Jesus, it's like dragging Jesus into court with us! Unbelievers see that Christians have no wisdom to settle their own differences; and that they have no power to imitate Jesus Christ - Who gave up His rights and was wronged by others. We become a reproach, and the Gospel is mocked by our own actions against one another.

#2 Since The Lord Is In Your Body,
Don't Drag Him Into Bed With A Harlot
(v12-20)

The Temple of Aphrodite in Corinth was funded by the prostitution of its priestesses. **Christians in the church at Corinth were paying these harlots for sex!** Far from being secretive and ashamed, they justified their behavior with three arguments. Paul deals with the first two arguments in verses twelve and thirteen; the third in verse eighteen.

1 Corinthians 6:12 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.

Their first argument was that “all things are lawful.” As Christians we have indeed been set free from the Old Testament law. We have tremendous liberty in Jesus Christ. Whatever God has created is ours to freely enjoy. The Corinthians applied this general principle to sex, and specifically sex with the temple prostitutes.

Paul will deal directly with the sex issue in a moment. For now he points out that every liberty has limits. You might have liberty – but is it really “helpful” to your relationship with Jesus? You might have liberty – but will it begin to enslave you? Liberty must be evaluated by its effect upon your life.

1 Corinthians 6:13 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 but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

“Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods” is to say that you have appetites and there is nothing wrong with satisfying your appetites. When you’re hungry, eat. If sex is just an appetite – *then satisfy it however you want!*

To indulge your appetites is to live on a lower level than God intends for you. Your appetites need to be regulated, not indulged. “But God will destroy both it [the stomach] and them [foods].” Your physical appetites are only temporary. They are of this world. In the future, in eternity, you will not be bound by them. You will have a stomach; there will be foods. But God will “destroy” the physical drives associated with them.

Their physical bodies were not to be given over to “sexual immorality.” Their physical bodies were “for the Lord” – to serve Him on earth. The Lord was “for the body” – to inhabit it by His Holy Spirit. The physical body of a Christian has a purpose, and that purpose is to reflect the presence of God on earth until Jesus comes.

Furthermore, your body doesn’t end at death:

1 Corinthians 6:14 And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power.

The Greek philosophy influencing the Corinthians taught that the body was nothing more than a tomb or a prison for the soul. The Greeks taught that it didn’t matter what you did to or with your body.

The conclusion was that you may as well totally indulge your body and its appetites! That philosophy was – and is - false. Your body will one day be resurrected. The point is that you cannot really separate yourself from your body. What you do with it does profoundly affect your soul and spirit.

1 Corinthians 6:15 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!

Sexual immorality would include premarital, extra marital, and unnatural sexual behavior; it would include pornography. When a believer indulges him or her self in sexual immorality, it's not just that Jesus is watching. You are dragging Jesus into bed with harlots! Would Jesus lie with a harlot? You should be disgusted. Paul is being graphic to make his point.

1 Corinthians 6:16 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."*

This verse troubles some people. It does not mean that having sex is equivalent to being married; or that you must marry someone if you have sex with them. It means that sex was intended to be enjoyed within marriage between a man and a woman as the completion and consummation of their total oneness. Sex in marriage is an important part of emotional, spiritual, and physical oneness. You should not see it as something purely physical that can be separated from marriage. It can only be truly enjoyed and truly appreciated when it is governed by the spiritual union that exists in a biblical marriage between believers.

1 Corinthians 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit *with Him*.

Sexual sin reflects upon your Lord. Your sin doesn't in any way pollute His sinless nature. But it profanes your testimony and reflects badly on Jesus because you are one with Him.

1 Corinthians 6:18 Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.

Rather than think you are free to indulge in sexual immorality, you should "flee" from it!

This curious phrase, “every sin that a man does is outside the body,” was the third argument that the Corinthians used to justify their sexual immorality. In other words, physical sin cannot affect the spirit within. “Not so!” says Paul. You **cannot** separate body, soul, and spirit. You are one person and what you do affects your whole personality.

1 Corinthians 6:19 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?

1 Corinthians 6:20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.

The Lord inhabits your physical body by His Spirit. You are His temple on the earth. The Spirit came to live within you when you were saved. In order to save you, Jesus had to pay the price of your redemption. The price was His death on the Cross, His blood shed for your sins. Since He bought you at such a great price, you belong to Him. You were set free from slavery to sin, but are now His slave. You are His willing and voluntary slave. “Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit...”

Conclusion

The church on earth, and each individual Christian in the church, is called to kingdom living **right now**. We should be showing those lost in the kingdom of darkness what it is like to be in the kingdom of heaven.

Suing your brothers and sisters certainly does not show a kingdom lifestyle. Neither does indulging yourself in sexual immorality.

Free yourself from lawsuits; flee from sexual immorality. Live as though you are in the Lord’s body, and as though the Lord is in your body.