

1 Corinthians – Lesson 8

6 Dare (τολμάω) any of you, having a matter (πράγμα) against another, go to law (κρίνω) before the unrighteous (αδικος), and not before the saints (ἅγιος)? 2 Do you not know (οιδα) that the saints (ἅγιος) will judge (κρίνω) the world (κόσμος)? And if the world (κόσμος) will be judged (κρίνω) by you, are you unworthy to judge (κριτήριον) the smallest matters (ἐλάχιστος)? 3 Do you not know (οιδα) that we shall judge (κρίνω) angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life (βιωτικός)? 4 If then you have judgments (κριτήριον) concerning things pertaining to this life (βιωτικός), do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church (εκκλησία) to judge? 5 I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man (σοφός) among you, not even one, who will be able to judge (διακρίνω) between his brethren (ἀδελφός)? 6 But (ἀλλά) brother (ἀδελφός) goes to law (κρίνω) against brother (ἀδελφός), and that before unbelievers (ἄπιστος)!

6:1 – It seems that all the matters Paul has addressed up to this point have come to him through messengers. Our task is to try to reconstruct the situation found in chapter 6. There is a link between the last five verses of chapter 5 and 1 Corinthians 6:1-8 in the word “to judge” (κρίνω). Gordon Fee explains it this way: Paul concludes the previous argument by insisting that the church is not to judge those “outside” but must judge those “inside.” That had to do first of all with the expulsion of the incestuous man; but it also has to do with another kind of “judgment” that must take place within the Christian community, namely in matters of everyday life where one member has a grievance against another.¹ Paul begins this chapter with some very strong language – “Dare any of you”. We know he is addressing the church in this letter, but he is also addressing a particular problem in this chapter. Have you ever corrected an unruly child and placed them in a corner or in a chair? And then warned the child: I dare you to move! One translator equated this phrase with “have the audacity.” The legal terminology “go to law” means to bring a lawsuit. Paul was very familiar with the court in Corinth since he had been brought before the βῆμα (*bema*) or judgment seat in *Acts 18:12-16*. In verse 15 of this passage, the Roman authorities allowed the Jews to handle their own internal matters. Every Jewish community had a בֵּית דִּין (*bet din*) – “house of judgment” – which possibly met in the synagogue to handle disputes. This system began after the return from Babylonian captivity and was still in operation during the time of Paul. Again, the following citation by Fee is helpful: On the basis of *Exodus 21:1*, the rabbis had concluded that it was unlawful for Jews to bring their cases before Gentile law courts. The Talmud reflected this as follows: In any place where you find heathen law courts, even though their law is the same as the Israelite law, you must not resort to them since it says, ‘These are the judgments which thou shalt bring before them,’ that is to say, ‘before them’ and not before heathens.² This concept was rooted in the old idea of bringing a matter before the elders at the gate, as in *Ruth 4* – Boaz redeeming the inheritance. The “unrighteous” is not a denigration of the Roman judicial system for Paul himself had appealed to the Roman system in *Acts 25:10-11*. It is simply used in contrast to the saints or the church or the Christian community.

¹ Fee, G. D. (1987). *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament (p 228). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

² Fee, G. D. (1987). *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament (p 231). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

6:2 – We often say, “Life should be lived with a view of eternity.” And so it is with the apostle Paul. He has used this “Do you not know” two times already (3:16 and 5:6). Of the ten times this phrase appears in *1 Corinthians*, six are in this chapter. It seems to apply to things they should have known as Christians. The idea of the saints judging the world was based on *Daniel 7:22*. If you – the saints – are going to judge the world, are you not competent to judge the smallest or least important cases? This seems to identify the present case as trivial. The case must certainly have been one of monetary value and therefore involved wealthier members of the church at Corinth and, possibly, leaders of the congregation.

6:3 – In *1 Corinthians 4:9*, Paul was a spectacle (θέατρον) to the angels, and now, he includes himself with the saints at Corinth as judging the angels. The concept of a judgment for wicked angels is found in *2 Peter 2:4*. We may not fully understand the mechanics of this statement but Paul expected the Corinthians to know about it. The translation “How much more” for the Greek μήτι (*may'-tee*) only appears here in the NKJV of the New Testament. The literal meaning of this compound word is “not anything”. And, if the saints are going to judge angels – heavenly creatures of an order above humans, how much more should they be able to judge in matters that pertain to everyday affairs!

6:4 – This verse continues the reasoning of the previous one and is reminiscent of *5:12*. IF - If you are judging the things of this life in the future, then how can you entrust jurisdiction to outsiders – men who count for nothing in our community?

6:5-6 – In *4:14*, Paul said he was not writing to shame the Corinthians but to warn them. But here he leaves no doubt – his intent is to shame. And Paul opens with sarcasm – **Is it so?** Have you ever corrected young people for doing something dangerous and asked, “Don’t you have any sense?” or “What were you thinking?” Is it possible that there is not a wise man among them? Remember wisdom played a big role in the first four chapters – to the extent that Paul stated in *3:18* that one had to become a fool in order to be wise. Even in *1:26* Paul said there weren’t many wise men among them. This is the last time Paul uses *sophos/sophia* in this letter except in *12:8*. In chapter 8, he begins to use a companion word – knowledge (*gnosis*). Is there no one wise enough to “render a decision” or “settle a dispute” between brothers? The dispute is between brothers in Christ and friendly arbitration is warranted. Paul continues to express his disbelief as he reiterates that a brother takes his brother to court – a court of unbelievers. There is no article before “unbelievers” which probably indicates their lack of faith rather than a direct reference to the courts of Corinth. This applies to every Christian community in every age. Christians airing their differences and “dirty laundry” before unbelievers would certainly hurt the cause of Christ in Corinth and in Murfreesboro.

7 Now therefore, it is already an utter failure (ηττημα) for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong (ἀδικέω)? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated? **8** No, you yourselves do wrong (ἀδικέω) and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren (ἀδελφός)! **9** Do you not know (οιδα) that the unrighteous (αδικος) will not inherit the kingdom (βασιλεία) of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators (πόρνος), nor idolaters, nor adulterers (μοιχός), nor homosexuals (μαλακός), nor sodomites (ἀρσενοκοίτης), **10** nor thieves (κλεπτης), nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will

inherit the kingdom (βασιλεία) of God. 11 And such were some of you. But (ἀλλά) you were washed (ἀπολούω), but (ἀλλά) you were sanctified (ἀγιάζω), but (ἀλλά) you were justified (δικαιώω) in the name (ὄνομα) of the Lord (κύριος) Jesus and by the Spirit (πνεῦμα) of our God.

6:7-8 – After stating that what they were doing was a shame (verse 5), Paul declares emphatically that lawsuits between brethren – no matter the outcome – are a complete failure or loss for the church. The word for “failure” (**ἥττημα – hayt´-tay-mah**) is a rare word in scripture. Paul uses it twice in the New Testament – here and in *Romans 11:12*. It also appears in the Septuagint (LXX) translation of *Isaiah 31:8*. With two very pointed questions, Paul suggests that it is better to suffer wrong or be cheated than to win the litigation. Jesus taught both principles in the Sermon on the Mount in *Matthew 5:39-40*. The passive ideas of being wronged and defrauded in verse 7 become outright accusations in verse 8 – they were doing these exact things to their brothers in Christ!

6:9-10 – For the third of six times in this chapter, Paul uses the phrase “**Do you not know**” to indicate that the Corinthians should have known better. They should have known that the unrighteous (ἄδικος - *ahd´-ee-kohse*) will not inherit the kingdom of God. In verse 1 the Corinthians were bringing their disputes before the unrighteous (ἄδικος). In fact, the saints are going to judge them (the “unrighteous”) according to verse 2. While many versions show a break between verses 8 and 9, please don’t miss the linguistic connection. Ἄδικος (“unrighteous” or “unjust”) is the adjectival form of the verb “to accept or do wrong” (ἀδικέω – *ahd-ee-keh´-o*) in verses 7-8. This adjective ἄδικος is used 12 times in the New Testament but I want us to see just two other passages where it is used: *Matthew 5:45* and *Luke 18:11*. Since they should know that the unrighteous (ἄδικος) will not inherit the kingdom of God, Paul now gives them a strong warning: **Do not be deceived!** This imperative or command is in the present tense and could be better translated as “Stop being deceived!” or “Stop being led astray!” Paul now gives a list of ten types of people who will not inherit the kingdom of God. This is not an all-inclusive list but includes six that were previously mentioned in *1 Corinthians 5:11*. The sexually immoral or fornicators (πόρνος – *por´-nohse*) were first addressed in the opening verses of chapter 5. Next Paul mentions idolaters again and their inclusion at the first part of the list among the sexual sins “may point to the immorality of much of the heathen worship of the day.”³ Adulterers (μοιχός – *moy-chohse*) are married persons having sexual relations of any kind outside marriage – with someone other than their mate. This Greek word appears only two other times in the New Testament – *Luke 18:11* and *Hebrews 13:4*. “Homosexuals” and “sodomites” are from two Greek words referring to the passive and active male partners in consensual homosexual acts. The first term is μαλακός (*mahl-ah-kohse*) which literally means “soft” and thus came to mean “effeminate”. The other term is ἀρσενοκοίτης (*ar-sen-oh-koy´-tace*) which is found only here and in *1 Timothy 1:10* in the New Testament. It is a slangy term referring to the male who takes the active role in homosexual acts. According to Richard Oster, Ἀρσενοκοίτης “is very rare in ancient Greek literature and is apparently a compound Greek word of Jewish origin which stemmed from the wording of *Leviticus 18:22* and *20:13* in the LXX.”⁴ The only other new term in this list is “thieves” (κλέπτης - *klep´-tace*) and is the source of our word *kleptomania*. Such people will not inherit the kingdom of God!

³ Morris, L. (1985). *1 Corinthians: an introduction and commentary* (Vol. 7, p. 96). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

⁴ Oster, R. (1995). *1 Corinthians* (1 Co 6:9). Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co.

6:11 – Now Paul makes his point: You Corinthians were unrighteous before you became Christians – you practiced some of the same horrible sins found in this list – just as some in almost any congregation of the Lord’s body today were once guilty. You were unrighteous at one time, but something is different now. Using the strong adversative ἀλλά (*ah-lah’* – “but”), Paul reminds them of what changed using a Greek word found only one other time in the New Testament and removes any doubt to its meaning here – *Acts 22:16*. You were washed (ἀπολούω – *ahp-oh-loo’-oh* – meaning “to wash oneself”). The filth of our former lifestyle has been washed away. But you were sanctified – set aside for God’s holy purposes. But you were justified – declared innocent even though you were guilty. These three things – being washed or baptized, sanctified and justified – occurred in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

12 All things are lawful (ἐξεστιν) for me, but (ἀλλά) all things are not helpful (συμφέρω). All things are lawful (ἐξεστιν) for me, but (ἀλλά) I will not be brought under the power (ἐξουσιάζω) of any. 13 Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body (σῶμα) is not for sexual immorality (πορνεία) but for the Lord (κύριος), and the Lord (κύριος) for the body (σῶμα). 14 And God both raised up (ἐγείρω) the Lord (κύριος) and will also raise us up (ἐξεγείρω) by His power (δύναμις).

6:12 – Paul repeats the phrase “**All things are lawful (or ‘permissible’)**” in this verse and will do the same in *10:23*. This may be a slogan of the Corinthians – freedom in Christ and freedom from the law of Moses has made everything permissible. This is why they could boast about the incestuous man in chapter 5. So, Paul turns their slogan into a theological lesson. Yes, in Christ, something may be lawful – but it may not be expedient or helpful. It may be lawful for a Christian to own 100 dogs or cats but, if these take food from the mouths of the poor or time away from God, then it may not be useful. (We’re not talking about a legitimate business to support a family.) Or golf – it is lawful and can be good for one’s health. But, when it interferes with one’s Christianity, it is not good. Then Paul repeats their slogan and makes a play on words in Greek that might appear like this in English: “**All things are in my power (ἐξεστιν), but I will not be overpowered (ἐξουσιάζω) by anything.**” We must be aware of the same danger. We are free in Christ, but it is easy for us to become like the Pharisees and let that freedom turn into bondage – perhaps the bondage of good works to “earn” our salvation. The question we should ask is not “Is it legal?” but rather “Is it beneficial for the kingdom of God?”

6:13 – This sounds like another slogan that Paul is going to address. The Corinthians are seemingly equating sexual urges with hunger – that they are a physical matter and not spiritual ones. I like Duane Warden’s explanation: “An appetite for food is not license for gluttony, and a desire for sex is not license for sexual immorality. God has provided for the fulfillment of both appetites with restraint. The body and its appetites belong to the Lord.”⁵ What Paul teaches here is like the teaching of Jesus in *Mark 7:14-23* – it’s not what enters into a man that defiles him but what comes out. God is going to destroy both the food and the stomach. Paul then switches from the stomach to the body. Our bodies were not created for sexual immorality but for the Lord. Our bodies were designated for service to the Lord. And our Lord dwells in the bodies of Christians. Jesus emphatically

⁵ Warden, D. (2016). *1 Corinthians*. Truth for Today Commentary (1 Co 6:12-13). Searcy, AR: Resource Publications.

promised this in *John 14:23*. Perhaps it is hard for us to comprehend how the body is “**for the Lord, and the Lord for the body**”. But it seems to be Paul’s way of responding to their slogan: “**Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food.**” When we consider the next verse, we see that the Lord’s body was necessary for our redemption. It suffered a cruel death but was raised by the power of God. Paul is going to discuss the resurrection in detail in chapter 15 but, for now, he is just affirming that there will be a bodily resurrection. The body has not been prepared for destruction but rather for the resurrection. The body is not for immorality; the body is for immortality.

6:14 – Is this not the basis of our hope? Just as God raised the Lord from the dead, He will also raise us up at the last day (*15:19, 23, 42-44*). The resurrection power of God was the emphasis of that first sermon on Pentecost (*Acts 2:32*).

15 Do you not know (οιδα) that your bodies (σῶμα) are members (μέλος) of Christ? Shall I then take the members (μέλος) of Christ and make them members (μέλος) of a harlot (πόρνη)? Certainly not! (Μη γένοιτο) 16 Or do you not know (οιδα) that he who is joined (κολλάω) to a harlot (πόρνη) is one body (σῶμα) with her? For “the two,” He says, “shall become one flesh (σάρξ).” 17 But he who is joined (κολλάω) to the Lord (κύριος) is one spirit (πνεῦμα) with Him.

6:15 – For the fourth time in this chapter, Paul asks a question with “**Do you not know...?**” Once again, Paul uses this rhetorical device to remind them of something they should have known – that Christians’ bodies are members of Christ – they are “**for the Lord**” (verse 13). (See also *Ephesians 5:30*.) As we’ll continue to see, the Corinthians – like other Greeks in the first century – separated the spirit and the body. The latter was expected to perish and was therefore of little value; whereas, the spirit would survive. Paul had taught them differently with the gospel and thus expected them to know better. As the body is “**for the Lord**” (verse 13), it follows that each Christian’s body is a member of Christ – a part of Him. We are “**in Christ**” because we have “**put on**” Christ (*Galatians 3:27; 2 Corinthians 5:17*). Paul will further develop this idea of individual Christians as members of the body – the church – in chapter 12. We are members of Christ’s body to do His work – we are His hands and feet to do His will. We are to be united or one with Christ – not “**one flesh**” with a prostitute. This identifies another problem at Corinth – some of the members of the church were having sexual relations with prostitutes. This becomes a little clearer in chapter 7 but now Paul is addressing a particular type of sexual immorality. And he shows how ridiculous this is by his answer to the question at the end of verse 15 – “**Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute?**” Μη γένοιτο – **Certainly not!** Literally, this short phrase means something like “**May it never be!**” or “**Let it not be!**” (“**God forbid!**” in the KJV.)

6:16 – In conjunction with the question raised at the end of the previous verse, Paul asks for the fifth time in this chapter “**Do you not know?**” It is a question which should be easy for them to answer because they had been taught this. “**Or do you not know that he who is joined (κολλάω – same word used in Matthew 19:5) to a harlot (πόρνη) is one body with her?**” The Greek word κολλάω carries the meaning of “glue together” “sticks to” or “adheres”). Notice its use in *Romans 12:9* – “**Cling to what is good**”. This is certainly the opposite of what the Corinthians were doing. They should have known from scripture – “**For He says**” – *Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5*.

6:17 – In contrast to the man joined to a prostitute, the Christian is joined to Christ. We are members of Him (verse 15). This is similar to what Paul writes in Ephesians 5 about the church being the bride of Christ. Instead of being one with a prostitute, Christians are one with Christ – united in mind (2:16) and spirit. This is illustrated by *Amos 3:3* – “**Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?**” We must be one in spirit with Christ to “**walk in newness of life**” (*Romans 6:4*).

18 Flee (φεύγω) **sexual immorality** (πορνεία). Every **sin** (ἀμαρτήμα) that a **man** (ἄνθρωπος) does is **outside** (ἐκτός) the **body** (σῶμα), but he who **commits sexual immorality** (πορνεύω) **sins** (ἀμαρτάνω) against his own **body** (σῶμα). **19 Or do you not know** (οἶδα) that your **body** (σῶμα) is **the temple** (ναός) of the **Holy** (ἅγιος) **Spirit** (πνεῦμα) **who is** in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? **20 For** (γάρ) you were bought at a price; therefore **glorify** (δοξάζω) God in your **body** (σῶμα) and in your **spirit** (πνεῦμα), which are God’s.

6:18 – Paul now issues a command – an imperative – “**Flee sexual immorality**”. The present tense indicates this is an ongoing action – something you and I must continually do to avoid sexual immorality. We must flee from sexual immorality as Joseph fled from Potiphar’s wife – *Genesis 39:12*. The last part of this verse has generated a lot of speculation, but we need to keep it in context with what Paul has just written in verses 15-17. Joseph’s words in *Genesis 39:9* explain it all.

6:19-20 – For the sixth and final time in this chapter, Paul asks the question: “**Do you not know?**” He knew they had been taught to live differently. The emphasis here is on the Christian’s body – it is the Lord’s. In 3:16, Paul had used a similar phrase referring to the church. Now Paul is moving away from the Corinthian Christians as the Lord’s body to individual Christians and their bodies. What is true of the whole is true of the individual parts. My body is the temple of the Holy Spirit just as your body is the temple – the sanctuary – of the Holy Spirit. Just as God dwelt in the sanctuary of the temple (ναός) – in the Holy of Holies – on the mercy seat between the cherubim, His Spirit dwells in us. We received His Holy Spirit as a gift when we were baptized for the remission of our sins (*Acts 2:38*). We are not our own – we are not free spirits. We belong to God – we are His new Creation. Remember how Jesus felt about the temple of God? His example can help us understand how we should view our bodies as the temple of the Holy Spirit. Notice *Matthew 21:12-13*. How do you think Jesus feels when He sees us abusing our bodies with sexual immorality? We are not our own and Paul explains why – “**For (γάρ) you (‘we’) were bought at a price.**” There can be no doubt that Paul is referring to the death of Christ. And, since He purchased us with His own blood, we have certain obligations – the first of which is to glorify or honor God with our bodies instead of engaging in sexual immorality. Some manuscripts do not have the additional phrase “**and in your spirit, which are God’s.**” Paul is concerned with the way we use our bodies. Notice *Philippians 1:20*.

SECTION OUTLINE SIX (1 CORINTHIANS 6)

Paul deals with two sins plaguing the Corinthian church.

I. LAWSUITS (6:1–11)

A. The facts (6:1, 6): Some Christians in Corinth are taking fellow believers to court before pagan judges to settle petty matters.

B. The folly (6:2–5, 7–11): Paul condemns this action on three accounts.

1. It is illogical (6:2–5): Inasmuch as believers will someday judge angels, can they not be expected to settle their differences down here with the help of other Christians?

2. It is illegal (6:7–8): Apparently they are using the court system to defraud each other.

3. It is inexcusable (6:9–11).

a. God has forgiven them of so many horrible sins (6:11).

b. Could they not forgive one another of a few lesser sins (6:9–10)?

II. LASCIVIOUSNESS (6:12–20): Paul warns them to control their bodies in all areas.

A. The realms (6:12–18)

1. In regard to food (6:12–13a): In a nutshell, don't let food master you.

2. In regard to sexual matters (6:13b–18): We are to flee from sexual immorality.

B. The rationale (6:19–20): Our body is God's temple, paid for by the blood of Jesus.⁶

⁶ Willmington, H. L. (1999). The Outline Bible (1 Co 6). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.