

1 Corinthians 6. Selected verses.

When any of you has a grievance against another, do you dare to take it to court before the unrighteous, instead of taking it before the saints? ² Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? ³ Do you not know that we are to judge angels—to say nothing of ordinary matters? ⁴ If you have ordinary cases, then, do you appoint as judges those who have no standing in the church? ⁵ I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to decide between one believer and another, ⁶ but a believer goes to court against a believer—and before unbelievers at that?

But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

¹² “All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are beneficial. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything. ¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? ²⁰ For you were bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body.

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As he does so often in his letters, Paul while addressing an issue which is specific to the time and place of his readers, clearly teaches an important lesson for all Christians in every age and place.

The city of Corinth was home to two opposing versions of the same Greek philosophical movement. Both taught that we were “spiritual beings in a physical body” but that is where the difference lay. One

group said that the body should therefore be starved, beaten and treated with contempt as it was a prison and should be hated.

The other group taught that the prison body had no value or importance so you might as well eat, drink and party to excess! You were spirit, so your body was of no value.

So, Paul's little group of early Christians were surrounded by both debauchery and extreme mortification of the flesh.

Secondly, Corinth had turned the application of civil law into a spectator sport and accusing and judging one another had become almost an obsession.

Their law stated that if there was a dispute it should be dealt with by advancing up the stages of their legal system as follows:

- 1) Three arbitrators should be appointed. One independent and one by each of the parties.
- 2) The Court of the Forty, consisting of all citizens over the age of 60.
- 3) A trial before 201 citizens for "small" issues OR up to 1,000 citizens for "big" issues.

All citizens sitting in judgement were paid a daily stipend and refusal to serve meant arrest and imprisonment!

You can imagine that everyone was in everyone's business, every man must have frequently been judging his neighbor, and that every human failing was turned into "prime time viewing".

It would seem that, life, privacy, rights, individuals had no value in Corinth

It was in that culture of philosophical teaching and legal chaos that Paul tells the church in Corinth to keep their disputes to themselves, to sort out problems “in house” and to remember the teachings of the Jewish Law which had been perfected in Christ.

To a Jew, and we believe the Corinthian church was mainly made up of converts, judgement was God’s alone and any judgement by man must be in line with Bible teaching.

There was also a non- scriptural belief circulating at that time that on “Judgment Day” God’s chosen would assist God in passing judgment on the rest of the world and even on angels !

So, focusing first on the Law. Paul instructs that they live by God’s commandments and avoid getting caught up in the muck and mire of the surrounding community.

He stresses mercy. Reminding them of God’s mercy to them and how they should treat one another as God has treated them.

All of this was of course even more highlighted in the Teachings of Christ. This new revelation of Good News.

Turning then to address the philosophic arguments about physical bodily issues. Paul lets loose a real “hell fire and damnation” sermon on all the worst things you can do to harm yourself and others.

He reminds them that the Bible tells us that we were created by God and that the very life blood which flows through our veins is God given, is God in action. That we are precious and wonderfully made, formed in the womb by the miracle of God’s power and constantly provided for, guarded and lead by God.

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.

God so loved the world that God had made it with beauty and care and made humans the pinnacle and stewards of creation.

God so loved the world that God took flesh and blood in the Jesus.

God so loved the world that Jesus lived and walked and healed and taught for us. For each of us individually!

God so loved the world that Christ came for you.

Paul pleads with the people of Corinth to realize how much God values each one of them and to value themselves and each other.

Do not de-value your body or your neighbor he commands.

He writes:

“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are beneficial. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything.¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own?

The children of God belong to God. God has given you great power and freedom, use it wisely and for good. Respect all the gifts you have been given

Then suddenly and passionately turning to Christ and the teachings which they had only recently been taught and chosen to follow he then concludes with:

” you were bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body.”

God so loves and values- you act accordingly.

Otherwise, he seems to ask, was Jesus’s suffering and death for nothing?

Will you insult and reject all Jesus did by careless spoiling and polluting?

Value life and value lives because Jesus valued you so much that He gave His life so you might live. Amen