

## 1st Corinthians Chapter 6 - John Karmelich

1. My title for this lesson is, "Understanding our freedoms and responsibilities as Christians."
  - a) Now that I've stated my "lofty" title. ☺ Let me explain further.
2. The first half of this chapter deals with the issue of Christians suing other Christians in court.
  - a) The underlying point is about how we as Christians are to love other Christians.
    - i) Jesus said that the way non-Christians will know we are Christians is by our love for one another. That is a quote from John 13:34-35 and 15:12 and 15:17.
    - ii) The question becomes, "How do we show that love?" Is it a simple matter of giving hugs to people we see at church? ☺ Is that what Jesus meant?
    - iii) The answer is much more complicated. It means changing our lifestyle and the willingness to give up our rights in order to show love to other Christians.
  - b) The focus of the first eight verses of this lesson is about the concept of believers suing other believers in a courtroom setting. Lawsuits and court settings existed 2,000 years ago just as it exists today. Paul is going to teach that Christians should never sue each other in a public court setting. Why? To fulfill the commandment to "love the fellow Christian". In other words, Paul is saying it is better to suffer wrong than to let the world know that one Christian is suing another.
    - i) When we sue, we are saying to the world around us, that money and stuff is greater than the forgiveness and fellowship of Christ.
    - ii) Lawsuits against other Christians are a prime example of not following Jesus command to love other Christians. We are putting money before that love.
  - c) As you read this lesson and think about the text that Paul writes, think about ways we are and are not showing love to fellow Christians. That's the key point of this text.
3. The second half of this chapter deals with issues of sexual purity among Christians.
  - a) The main idea is that our physical bodies of Christians belong to God. When we dedicate our lives to God, we also have dedicated our physical bodies to Him. Our physical bodies now belong to God and not ourselves.
  - b) While we as Christians have the freedom to do whatever we want, that freedom should not be used as a liberty to sin. What we want to do is live a life pleasing to God in all that we do. That includes sexual issues. That is why God ordains sexual acts to only be within the context of marriage. God intended men and women to enjoy sex, but only within the context of a one man, one woman marriage relationship.
  - c) So why are both of these issues combined as one chapter? Because Paul is trying to teach Christians everywhere how to act in ways that are pleasing to God.
    - i) One way is for Christians to show that we love fellow Christians. One way we show that love is we are willing to give up our rights. It is better to be financially hurt by another Christian than to go to a public court setting and let the world know that we care more about "stuff" than we do another Christians salvation.
    - ii) Another way we act in ways that is pleasing to God is to honor God with our conduct. Just as avoiding suing Christians is a way to act that is pleasing to God, so is staying sexually pure within the context of marriage.
    - iii) What Paul is trying to teach is ways in which Christians can demonstrate their maturity as believers. It is more than just understanding the basic principals of Christianity. It is about living a daily life that is pleasing to God in all that we do. It is about caring about others' salvation to the point where we will let ourselves suffer loss and doing things to avoid the possibility of sin, let alone act on it.
  - d) On that confusing note, we are ready to begin Chapter 6. ☺

4. Chapter 6, Verse 1: If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints?
- a) Lawsuits have become a common issue in modern society. In the United States, a lawsuit is filed every 15 seconds. There is a joke in this country that a law does not become official until it agreed upon, voted upon and the courts approve that law.
  - b) Corinth had a formal court system and required men over 40 to be part of a "jury pool" that could be called upon at any time. The Romans had a whole government system in place of local leaders who were also judges. Juries were called in when needed.
    - i) Trials were also a public form of entertainment. In today's world, people are sued by giving them notice and courtroom dates were set up. In this time era, people would literally drag their opponents to the public squares to decide the cases.
  - c) With all of that background in mind, one can see why Paul was so adamant against the idea of Christians suing other Christians. The world around them would become very aware of the dispute and they could see one Christian showing hatred for another.
    - i) In Jewish society's they had their own private court system. Jews considered it an embarrassment to air out their problems in the public court. Jewish people would settle their disputes with representatives from their local synagogues. I suspect Paul had this in mind when he wanted the church to set up a private court system.
  - d) Notice Paul is not saying the Christian with the dispute do not have a legitimate case. Paul is not saying the dispute shouldn't be worked out. Paul is only condemning the concept of going to public civil courts in order to solve the problem.
    - i) What Paul is saying is the situation should be worked out privately.
    - ii) In the Christian "world" today, at least in the United States, there are private judges one can turn to, to solve such issues. There are Christian organizations who, when they write up their contracts, specify that any disagreements must be solved and heard in such private courtroom settings.
    - iii) The two parties involved can even turn to someone, or a group of people within their own church to solve the problem.
    - iv) The point is to keep the issue as best as possible within the church.
  - e) Is Paul condemning the concept of the public justice system? No. As taught in Romans 13:1, the concept of government is God ordained. Paul was a Roman citizen and used his rights as a Roman citizen on several occasions (as recorded in Acts).
    - i) The focus here is on civil matters and not criminal matters. If a person is guilty of say stealing or murder, the court system should be used by both Christians and non-Christians alike for the purpose of getting justice.
  - f) One more related issue: What about Christians suing non Christians?
    - i) It is difficult to say from the text how a Christian should react in such a situation. Essentially the text is silent on that issue. Some say that if a Christian is suing a non-Christian, that Christian is showing that their love of money or things is greater than that of God. Others will argue that the purpose of Paul's argument is for Christians to show their love to other Christians and non-Christians are "fair game". In summary, you can't make a strong case either way based on the text.
    - ii) OK, on to a related tough question: What about Christians who work as attorneys, expert witnesses and those involved in the civil court procedure? Is it acceptable for Christians to have such jobs? If one is a Christian attorney, and the client is a strong Christian, the attorney may want to talk to the client about whether or not the lawsuit is appropriate. If a Christian attorney is representing a non Christian person or entity, then one is simply doing their job and there is nothing morally wrong with that idea, nor is there anything illegal being done.
      - a) Paul is not condemning the civil court procedural system, just the idea of Christians using the court system to sue one another.

5. Verse 2: Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases?
- a) Verse 2 asks two questions to the Christians in Corinth. The first question is, "Don't you know the saints will judge the world?"
    - i) How will Christians judge the world? Jesus said when He returns, we as believers will rule and reign with Him. That includes getting involved with the judgment process. Jesus promised his 12 disciples that they would be judging the 12 tribes of Israel. (Matthew 19:28).
    - ii) What I also believe this means is that when the millennium begins, there will be unsaved survivors who will live on this earth. Christians who have lived through history will have resurrected bodies and rule over these people. Somehow, it will be our job to prevent and stop sinful acts during this millennial period.
  - b) The second question is, "And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases?" Paul wants to put our civil disputes in context of human history. If God is going to give us the privilege of judging nonbelievers, why do we still agree to sue fellow Christians? Let me put it this way: Christians inherit all things. Revelation 21:7 says that believers will inherit "all things". I'm not sure what that entitles, but I doubt we're going to have any unfulfilled needs in our resurrected bodies. ☺
    - i) The point is if we are going to live for eternity and have everything we need, why show "hatred" to a fellow Christian during this lifetime over "stuff".
    - ii) I read in a commentary about a Christian attorney who makes every effort to tell Christians who want to sue another Christian to drop the suits. That attorney has discovered in cases where the Christian goes through with the suit against other Christians, they are usually miserable afterwards whether they win or lose.
    - iii) Jesus says we are to show love for the fellow believers. If we put "stuff" over that love, then we are not showing love to our brethren. That Christian may have legitimately cheated you. We as Christians should make every effort to settle the case outside the court system. If the person who cheated you refuses all those options, then it is better to be cheated and "let it go" than to go to court. That is a key point of this section of the text.
6. Verse 3: Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!
- a) The bible teaches that Christians will judge angels. This does not mean that we are to judge the angels that watch over us and give them a demerit because they didn't prevent us from stubbing our toe on a particular day. ☺ What it does refer is the angels that rebelled against God and became demons.
    - i) Angels have free will. Revelation 12:9 describes Satan being thrown out of heaven and his angels with him. Apparently, many angels joined Satan in his rebellion. I believe part of our eternal duty is to judge such demonic creatures.
  - b) Paul's main point in Verses 2-3 are if we are to judge nonbelievers and if we are to judge angels, then why should we care about "stuff" more than the well-being of a fellow Christian? Even if that Christian cheated us somehow! Paul is reminding us that the eternal perspective is far more important than "stuff" in this lifetime.
7. Verse 4: Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church!
- a) Paul stopped defining the problem, and is now focusing on the solution: "To appoint men as judges within the church". In other words, Paul is not denying that such issues are not serious and they need to be dealt with. The issue is how we deal with them.
  - b) One pastor who commented on this issue stated that on occasions, "If a member of my church has an issue with a member of another church, both pastors will pick a third person from a third church to be the judge in this matter."

- i) That is one Christian way to solve the issue. As I stated, there are Christian organizations that will work for hire to be a judge and jury in such situations.
    - ii) Paul's point is not so much the specific Christian method of dealing with the issue. The main idea is that the church deal with it as opposed to the court system.
  - c) This leads me back to my lesson title: "Understanding our freedoms and responsibilities as Christians".
    - i) Remember we're not talking about a fellow Christian who we know and respect. We're talking about a fellow Christian who one is so angry at right now, they sue them to get their money back. Paul is teaching that in order to show love to that person, we settle matters within the church, not outside of it.
    - ii) We as Christians have the freedom to sue them in public court, but we are not showing our love of our salvation by suing them. Paul is not against doing "something" to solve the problem, just the option of the public court system.
8. Verse 5: I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? <sup>6</sup> But instead, one brother goes to law against another--and this in front of unbelievers!
- a) Paul is giving this speech on avoiding public lawsuits "to shame them". Apparently this issue was brought up by Paul as word got back to him that Christians in Corinth were suing each other in the public court system.
  - b) Back to my lesson theme: "What love for the fellow believer entails." Remember that Jesus said nonbelievers would recognize Christians by our love for one another. If we are in court suing other Christians, how are we showing love to that fellow believer? The world will "see" our hatred of each other if they see us in a courtroom setting.
    - i) Remember this is about civil issues, and not criminal proceedings. I don't have a problem turning a Christian into the authorities if they stole or murdered. That is a separate issue than civil lawsuits.
  - c) Paul's solution to civil problems is to find Christian judges and jurors and deal with it privately within the church.
  - d) Remember that Paul comes from a Jewish background and the Corinthian church is probably all, or mostly Gentile (non-Jewish) converts. Paul may have been thinking about the Jewish "system" of dealing with civil proceedings and is encouraging the Christian church to have their own private system in place.
9. Verse 7: The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?
- a) Notice the first sentence says, "Completely defeated already". The point is if a Christian sues another Christian and wins, as far as God is concerned, they have lost the case as one Christian has publicly humiliated another Christian.
  - b) There is a Christian denomination I know of where there was a major dispute among some of the leaders over some radio station antennas controlled by that denomination. There ended up being a public lawsuit over the issue. A settlement may have been necessary, but both parties are guilty of ignoring the principals of this chapter. They should have taken the issue through church mediation and not the court system.
  - c) Paul's point here is if the other party refuses to take the issue to the church to solve it, it is better to be "wronged and cheated" rather than go to public court. We may lose money and stuff in this lifetime, but the worse that can happen is we suffer in this lifetime.
    - i) One's eternal rewards in heaven are at stake here. I don't believe a Christian can be sent to hell for this issue. At the same time, the New Testament is full of references to eternal rewards for believers. I do believe one can suffer eternally based on the actions of taking other Christians to court.

- d) Getting back to my example of the Christian attorney who talks people out of lawsuits, my prayer is that other Christian attorneys follow that lead. Such attorneys may lose income as they cannot try the case, but at the same time, such an attorney is now being a great witness for Christ by discouraging such actions.
  - e) Paul's point is that it is better to be "cheated" than to sue a Christian in court.
10. Verse 8: Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers.
- a) Remember Paul brought up this issue as Christians in Corinth were guilty of this action. We're reading this section of the bible as Christians filed such lawsuits in Paul's time.
  - b) Let me end this section by trying to reverse the situation. Suppose some Christian says he or she wants to sue you or me? First, we should try to talk them into taking the issue to our churches or a private Christian mitigation service. Let's assume they refuse all of that action. If that's the case, we have to "let them win" rather than going to public court. Paul's point is in terms of eternal judgment, it is better to be cheated than to go to court with another Christian.
11. Verse 9: Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders<sup>10</sup> nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.
- a) Paul now changes topics in Verse 9. Paul is describing in these verses the actions of those who are going to hell. This is not designed to be a complete list of sins. These sins are more obvious if we watch the behavior of people. Remember being sent to hell is something we all deserve based on the sinfulness of our lives. We are saved because God has paid the price Himself for our sins. With that said, I do take the view that people who reject the cross message generally grow worse and worse in the behavior as they reject God more and more.
  - b) Some examples of this type of behavior are listed in Verses 9 and 10. I want to talk a little about each one.
  - c) The first one listed is the sexually immoral. The city of Corinth was so known for sexual prostitution that it became a Greek saying to act as a "Corinthian" when one regularly engages in sexual immoral situations.
    - i) God is not anti-sex. God invented the sexual act for our enjoyment. God designed it to be in the context of marriage. The problem is when we take it outside of marriage. That is the idea being stated in this verse.
    - ii) The verse is condemning any type of sexual act outside the bounds of marriage of one man and one woman.
  - d) The second sin listed is idolatry. This is about worshipping any god outside of the true God of this world. Suppose we meet a really nice person, but they worship a false god. Yes, they will suffer for eternity, no matter what their personality is like. God holds all people accountable to His standards. Remember false gods include the "god of fame and the god of money" and not just other religious believes.
  - e) The third sin listed is adultery. The reason this is separate from "the sexually immoral" is that adultery is about sin of the married person, while the sexually immoral refers to the single person who doesn't submit their bodies to God. Any sort of sexual relationship outside the confines of marriage is considered adultery.
    - i) The point is someone can call themselves a Christian, but if they are engaging in such actions and have no desire to repent, they are in danger of going to hell.
  - f) The next two are "male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders". The idea is of these two are the 1) aggressive homosexual who initiates man on man sexual acts and 2) the passive homosexual recipient of such an act. The point is whether one initiates such a sin or whether one is on the receiving end, it is still a sin to God.

- i) In Paul's day and age, homosexuality was a common act. In Greek culture, it was common for young boys to engage in such acts. Most of the early Roman emperors were guilty of such sins. What Paul is saying is just because it exists and is common, does not make it right in God's eyes.
  - ii) Are some men more attracted to men than others? Yes. God gives us all strengths and weaknesses. If this is an issue one is struggling with, then one has to lead a celibate life if one wants to please God. There are Christian ministries that reach out to homosexual men. Many who become Christians do walk away from that lifestyle and get married to members of the opposite sex.
  - g) The next thing on the list is "thievery". This is no less of an issue than homosexuality, but the explanation is much easier. The idea is about taking things that don't belong to you.
  - h) The next thing on the list is "greedy". The idea is to desire things one doesn't have. This is not about dreaming of being more financial successful. This is about the desire to steal things that don't belong to you. Remember that final of the 10 commandments is about not desire things that do not belong to us. (See Exodus 20:17).
  - i) The next thing on the list is "drunkards". The bible clearly condemns the practice of getting drunk. It does not condemn drinking in the first place, and one has to know their limits. If one drinks a little on a regular basis, one is pushing the limits.
    - i) Some Christians do accept a little bit of drinking as long as it is just that.
    - ii) Some Christians argue one should never drink at all, as to avoid this issue. I'll leave the debate there.
  - j) The next item is "slanderers". This is about making false accusations against others.
  - k) The final item is "swindlers". This is about cheating someone out of their money or possessions.
  - l) I went into some details on this list as to give ideas of what we as Christians out to watch out for in our own lives and lives around us. God does judge us based on our behavior. If you know someone struggling with one of these issues, it may help to show them this list and show them the eternal consequences of not changing their behavior.
12. Verse 11: And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.
- a) One of my favorite sentences in 1st Corinthians is "And that is what some of you were."
    - i) The point is if one did engage in one or more of these sins, it is not too late to get saved. One can turn from that issue and receive eternal salvation.
  - b) What if one makes a sincere vow to turn from one of these sins and still "slips" every now and then? That simply means one has sinned and it needs to be confessed. God does not expect perfection, but He does expect us to try and change. If somebody is making a sincere effort to turn from one of these lifestyles and still slips on occasion, I still consider them saved. As long as they confess it and make every effort to turn from it, they are forgiven of their sins.
  - c) Let's discuss the three terms, "washed, sanctified and justified" for a moment.
    - i) The idea of "washed" is when we first give our lives to Jesus, we are forgiven of all our sins. That washing covers all future sins, as long as we confess them as sins.
    - ii) The idea of "sanctified" means we are set apart for God. Let's say one owns a certain dinner plate that is only used by the head of the household and no one else is allowed to eat off that plate. That means the plate is "sanctified" (set apart) for that one person. When we give our lives to Christ, we are telling God in effect we belong to Him and not ourselves. We, like that dinner plate are now set apart for His use, not ours. That is what "sanctified" means. Our job is now to live for Him and not live for ourselves!

- iii) The final term is "justified". It is often expanded to say "Just as if we never sinned". The idea is we are fully forgiven of all sins, past present and future.
    - a) I think it is important to understand that just because we are forgiven of all sins doesn't mean we won't suffer the consequences of those sins.
    - b) David was forgiven of the sin of his sexual relation with Bathsheba, but God still made him suffer consequences for that sin. The same applies to us. We may be forgiven, but God may allow us to suffer in this lifetime for the damage caused by that sin.
  - iv) Finally, let's discuss these three concepts in context of "God the Father, God the Son (Jesus) and the Holy Spirit". It is in Jesus' name that these three things get done in our lives. It is God the Father that ordains these things for our life. It is the Holy Spirit that convicts us our sins and guides us to be pleasing to God.
13. Verse 12: "Everything is permissible for me"--but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"--but I will not be mastered by anything.
- a) One of the great principals to understand as a Christian is that we are free to do anything we want to do. The question is, "Do we want to do them?" We as Christians are not subject to "the law" of the Old Testament. As a forgiven Christian, we are free to live however we want. At the same time, if one is truly a believer in God, then one wants to please God in all that he or she does.
  - b) The point is we live in obedience to God not because we have to, but because we just want to! We are so grateful to God for forgiving us of our sins, that we desire to live a life that pleases Him in all that we do.
  - c) For example, is a Christian free to drink alcohol? Sure. A Christian can drink all he or she wants. The question becomes, "How much do you want" and who does one desire to please in one's life, one's self, one's friends or God?
  - d) The last line is the key here: "but I will not be mastered by anything".
    - i) The danger of giving ourselves over to "anything" is that we can be end up being mastered by that thing.
    - ii) Nobody starts off desiring to be a drunk or addicted to some drug. The danger in life is that no "thing" in life is every satisfying and we desire more and more in order to get the same high. We can end up being "mastered" by that thing.
      - a) That thing can include sexual sins as well as alcohol or drugs. It can include the desire to steal things as well. The point is we give into temptation. The next time we desire that sin, we have to do it to a greater level in order to satisfy that urge. We can become "mastered" by it.
14. Verse 13a: ""Food for the stomach and the stomach for food"--but God will destroy them both."
- a) Paul's point is not that food is good or bad. Paul is talking about being "mastered" by food. What he meant by that is that he will let food control his life.
    - i) Let me expand on that a little with the topic of "fasting". There are health reasons to do a fast every now and then, but the biblical reasons for fasting have nothing to do with the health reasons for fasting.
    - ii) Fasting is encouraged in the New Testament. (E.g., Matthew 6:16-18, 9:15, Acts 13:2, 14:23, 1st Corinthians 7:5, 2nd Corinthians 6:5). Fasting affects our prayer life. Somehow, someway, fasting is a way to get God to respond to prayer.
      - a) Does fasting guarantee God responds to our prayer? No. God is in charge and He answers all prayers on His timing. He can always say "no" or "not now" to any prayer request.
      - b) I think another purpose of fasting is to not get us "dependant" upon food over God. Fasting is a way of telling God, "You are more important to me that food, and I'm going to take the time I normally associate with eating and use it to worship you (or study your bible) or pray.

- iii) There is no text in the bible saying "how" we are fast, other than the fact we are not to make a big deal about it to others. (Matthew 6:16-18). There are different types and different lengths of fasts mentioned in the bible. Sometimes a fast is giving up eating all together for awhile. Sometimes a fast may be just giving up one's favorite food(s) for a certain period of time, like Daniel did in Daniel 10:3.
    - iv) Does the bible say we "have" to fast? No, it is just something that is encouraged every now and then as a way to show our dedication to God over food.
- 15. Verse 13b: The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.
  - a) Let's discuss how this sentence ties into the first sentence in Verse 13.
    - i) If you recall from the last chapter, the "trinity" makes their home inside of us. I talked about how the "real us" has no weight and the idea of God inside of us is not a physical problem. Given the fact that we as Christians have given our lives to God, and He makes His home inside of us, at that moment "our bodies are special" in that they belong to God and He dwells within us.
    - ii) With all of that said, one reason God desires sexual obedience for believers is because our bodies are dedicated to God. When we act with sexual immorality we are taking what is "holy" and making it "unholy".
    - iii) Is it a forgivable sin, yes. Should it be done? No. One has to remember that one is not only messing with one's salvation, but with one's "eternal rewards". Also remember that there are still consequences for our sins, even if we are forgiven.
  - b) It's probably important at this time to define what is "sexual immorality". It is the idea of any type of sexual experience (be it foreplay, fornication or the act of sex) outside the context of a marriage between one man and one woman. Any type of sex within the context of marriage with one's spouse is not immorality. God designed sex to be enjoyed between a husband and a wife.
    - i) What about the Old Testament men that had more than one wife? You cannot read any one of those stories where multi-wives were involved where anything good happens from that situation. It always turned out as a problem for the man when he took multiple wives. God ordained marriage to be between one man and one woman in the Garden of Eden. God has not changed His mind since then.
    - ii) Do I believe a man can be attracted to more than one woman? Sure. Do I believe some men can be physically attracted to other men? The question is not the attraction, but does one act on that attraction. The key is not to act on that desire.
    - iii) As a long term married man, I will still notice an attractive female. I have been taught the "sin" is the second look. My point is to notice that somebody is attractive is not the sin. To keep staring after the initial look is the danger.
  - c) With all of that said, I can get back to the sentence itself: The sentence is saying the body is for the Lord and the Lord is for the body. This gets back to my point that if we have given our lives to Jesus, the trinity now resides within us. Our body is now a sacred temple belonging to God. We shouldn't mess with immorality for that temple.
    - i) Is recreational sex within the context of marriage acceptable? Of course it is. ☺
  - d) So, why does Paul combine the topics of "food for the stomach" and the "body is for God" in two consecutive sentences?
    - i) The combined point is about not being "mastered" by things God wants us to avoid. Remember that we as Christians are free to do whatever we want, but what we should want is to live a life pleasing to God the Father.
    - ii) That includes keeping food in perspective of our relationship with God.
    - iii) That includes keeping sex in perspective of our relationship with God.
    - iv) The point is our love of God should drive all the decisions we make in life. That includes how much we care for food and our sexual relationships.

16. Verse 14: By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.
- a) Paul is using the eternal perspective to remind us to keep pure. The point is all Christians will be raised to heaven just as Jesus was raised from the dead.
  - b) Since we all have to give an account of our lives, and our rewards in heaven are based on how we acted on earth, that is a motivational factor for sexual purity.
17. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! <sup>16</sup> Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." <sup>17</sup> But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.
- a) Let's get back to life in the City of Corinth. This is a city known for sexual prostitution. There was a great temple full of sexual prostitutes, who would go into the city every day looking for men to join them in lovemaking to honor the female goddess "Aphrodite".
    - i) Many Greek philosophers also argued that one should satisfy their human needs and one of those needs was for sex. The Greeks had this strange "duel belief" that marriage should only be between one man and one woman, but at the same time men on men sexual relations were encouraged for young men and even sexual affairs were acceptable in this culture.
    - ii) I state all of this background to understand what the Corinthian church was up against. I believe there were Christians in the Corinth church who still engaged in illicit sexual acts as they believed "satisfying their sexual needs" was a natural thing and is irrelevant to their relationship with God.
  - b) With all that said, Paul is teaching us that to be "pure" with God is about disciplining ourselves sexually as well as other ways (controlling the food we eat).
    - i) Paul spends a lot of time talking about illicit sex as that was (and is) a common sin against God, let alone one's spouse.
    - ii) Paul states in Verse 16 that when one has sexual relations with a prostitute, one becomes "one" with that prostitute. The idea is a sexual relation causes us to be one with that sexual partner.
    - iii) I should add here that anything one does prior to giving one's life to God is forgiven and forgotten. While sexual immorality for the Christian is a forgivable offense, one still has to deal with the consequences of that sin. God may forgive us, but He usually lets us pay somehow for that sin that has been committed.
    - iv) One of my favorite quotes by Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel is "God sometimes punishes the adulterer by letting him or her now live with their new partner." The kind of person willing to have sex with a married man or woman is usually trouble over the long run. Sometimes the appropriate punishment is to let the adultery stay with the new partner.
    - v) Many marriages do survive incidents of one partner having such an affair. It usually takes a lot of good consulting and forgiveness, but it is possible. The danger in a marriage is once a man or woman is willing to cross that path, there is always the danger of it happening again.
  - c) Let's get back to the verses and give the positive "flip side" of staying pure. Verse 17 says, "He who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit".
    - i) Are sinful acts truly tempting? Of course they are. That is how Satan entices us. The consequences always (note that word always) come later.
    - ii) The positive news of God living in us is we are then given the opportunity to be united with God in a way a nonbeliever cannot understand. To be born again, is to be forgiven of all one's sins, past present and future. It's not an excuse to go out and sin, but it is knowing we are forgiven.

- iii) God wants to have a relationship with us. At any given moment in our lives, we choose to either obey God or obey our personal desires. If you are not sure at any one moment if it is God's will for you or me to do something, ask Him! Further, prayer and the bible is our guide on how to live our lives.
      - a) As I've stated in the past, sometimes God is "silent" only because He is testing us to see how much we trust Him! Still, know that sinful acts are never the will of God for our lives and are to be avoided.
    - iv) Don't forget the biblical principal of "fleeing temptation" (Also see 1st Corinthians 10:13). This leads us to the next verse of this chapter.
- 18. Verse 18: Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.
  - a) The solution when one is tempted in some sexually immoral sense is to flee. One should not stand there and argue it out. One should flee the situation.
  - b) Verse 18 teaches that sexual sins are a "special category" that is different from other types of sins. It does not mean that sexual sins are any worse in God's eyes than say stealing or murder. The point of Verse 18 is that sexual sins do harm against one's own body.
    - i) When we have sexual relationships outside of marriage, we develop a "bond" with that sexual partner, whether we realize it or not. That is why Paul quoted Genesis earlier when Paul said, "The two shall become one flesh". Is that sin forgivable? Yes. Are there consequences for that sin? Yes.
  - c) What Paul is trying to teach is that our "bodies" are special in that they belong to God and not to us. When we first give our lives to God, we are telling Him that all we are, all we own and all that is in us now belong to God. That means our physical bodies now belong to God and He should decide what we should do with those bodies.
    - i) To commit a sexual sin is not only a sin in that one commits an act that is displeasing to God, but it is a "special sin" in that one is causing harm to something that belongs to God and not to us.
    - ii) Our bodies "contain" the real us. Those bodies now belong to God and not us. A Christian should not want to do things with our body that are displeasing to God.
- 19. Verse 19: Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;<sup>20</sup> you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.
  - a) One has to think of one's physical body as a "temple" where God resides. That is not an excuse to avoid church and avoiding contact with other Christians. God still desires that Christians work as a team and not as a bunch of individual efforts for Him.
  - b) Since God resides in our body, a Christian has to understand that our body is "holy" and belongs to Him. We need to honor God with our physical bodies. That includes limiting sexual relationships to that within marriage.
  - c) Paul uses the term "You (we) are not your (our) own." That is confirming the idea that God is now the owner of our bodies and not ourselves. Therefore, we need to honor God with our bodies.
  - d) Let's tie this back to my theme for this lesson: We as Christians are free to do what we want, but what we should want is to glorify God in all that we do.
    - i) Christian freedom and Christian responsibility go hand in hand. We are free to do whatever we want, but what we should want to do, is to live a life pleasing to God in all that we do. That includes sexual issues.
    - ii) It is stressed heavily in this letter as sexual purity was a problem in this local church. At the same time, it is a lesson to all of us what God desires for us in our life. Do you want to remain sexually pure in marriage? Step one is to realize our bodies belong to God and not to ourselves. The second step is to realize that we should want to please God in all that we do!

- iii) Back in Chapter 3, Verse 2, Paul was putting down the Christians in Corinth in that Paul had to feed them milk and not solid food. That was not meant to be taken literally. The idea is the church is still like a baby in that Paul had to focus on the basic's of Christianity and couldn't handle the more advanced teachings.
        - a) Almost all of First Corinthians are examples of "advanced teaching". The idea of advanced teaching is for the Christian to learn how to mature in their relationship with God. Part of that maturity is about understanding that our bodies belong to God the Father and we are to honor Him with our bodies.
    - e) Let me end this with some issues on how to get help:
      - i) If one is tempted to have an affair, share that temptation with a Christian friend. Have them pray with you and for you. Flee the situation as much as possible. Try to focus on one's relationship with God and remember that one's eternity will depend on one's decision to act on that impulse.
      - ii) Let me discuss a related idea here. Many men, including Christian men today battle with internet pornography. While it is not a sexual act as Paul could envision, it is still thinking about sexual acts outside the context of marriage. Further, like any sin, it is never satisfying and always wants more and more. If this is an issue one struggles with, don't take it on alone. Find other Christian men to pray with you over the issue. If you don't know who to turn to, ask one's local pastor. It is a major issue right now.
      - iii) Finally, remember how to make a hot coal go cold – separate it from the other coals. If one has ever seen a fire based on hot coals, the coals stay hot when they are together. To make a piece of coal go cold, one has to separate it from the other coals. My point here is when one is tempted with a sexually immoral situation, one need's to separate oneself from that situation. One needs to be a like a hot coal that needs to get cold. That is why Paul urges us to "flee sexual immorality". The important first step is to get away from the situation, and then as much as possible, get some help from others.
20. These 20 verses in Chapter 6 are all "heavy" in that they deal with issues in our life to help us glorify God in all that we do.
- a) The first half of the chapter is about lawsuits. The underlying point is about showing love to one's fellow Christian, even at the point of being "wronged" for some action. Those verses are not condemning trying to fix the situation, just to avoid public court-room settings as a solution. It is better to be wronged and hurt then to let the world see how one Christian has hurt the other. Our love for the fellow Christian should be greater than to fix the wrongs done when such Christians hurt us.
  - b) The second issue presented in this chapter has to do with sexual purity. The underlying idea is that our bodies belong to God and we should honor Him with our bodies. We as Christians are free to do whatever we want, but what we should want is to please God in all that we do. That includes what we do with our bodies. Do the sexual laws of the Old Testament apply to Christians? No in the sense that we are not under the law and cannot lose our salvation by violating those laws. The answer is "Yes" in the sense that we should be grateful for our salvation and want to please God in all that we do! That includes how we act with our bodies toward others.
21. Let's pray: Father, Help us to remember that it is our desire to please You in all that we do. Help us to learn to live for You and not for ourselves. In situations where we are wronged by another Christian, help us to take that issue to the church and not the public court setting. If the other party refuses to cooperate, help us to accept the wrong. Further, help us to be "pure" in all of our lives, not just sexual areas. Help us to remember our bodies belong to You and help us to please You with our bodies, as well as our soul and spirit. For we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.