

1st Corinthians Chapters 4 - 6

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Introduction:

Again, we are combining short chapters.

FACING THE JUDGMENT FROM OTHERS

(1) So look at Apollos and me as mere servants of Christ who have been put in charge of explaining God's mysteries. (2) Now, a person who is put in charge as a manager must be faithful. (3) As for me, it matters very little how I might be evaluated by you or by any human authority. I don't even trust my own judgment on this point.

- **Paul** and **Apollos** were correctly described as **servants**, not centers of leadership and planning. **God** required **faithfulness** as they explained the **mysteries** of **God** that were being revealed.
- Paul was not seeking the approval of the readers at Corinth. In fact, he didn't even pass **judgment** on himself and seek to approve his own conduct.

FACING JUDGMENT FROM GOD

(4) My conscience is clear, but that doesn't prove I'm right. It is the Lord Himself who will examine me and decide.

- Paul was okay within himself, but that doesn't make him right with the **Lord**. Approval is up to **the Lord**. **William Barclay** describes it this way:

Only God knows all the motives. "Man sees the deed but God sees the intention." Many a deed that looks noble may have been done from the most selfish and ignoble motives; and many a deed which looks base may have been done from the highest motives. He who made the human heart alone knows it and can judge it.

(5) So don't make judgments about anyone ahead of time -- before the Lord returns. For He will bring our darkest secrets to light and will reveal our private motives. Then God will give to each one whatever praise is due.

- The **Lord** will **return**. Then it will be soon enough for the Corinthian brethren to **praise** their teachers. Then all of the facts will come to **light** and **private motives** will be **revealed**.

A REBUKE OF CORINTHIAN PRIDE

(6) Dear brothers and sisters, I have used Apollos and myself to illustrate what I've been saying. If you pay attention to what I have quoted from the Scriptures, you won't be proud of one of your leaders at the expense of another.

- Paul has used his name and that of **Apollos** as proxies for local **leaders** at Corinth. He does not want the Corinthians to have exaggerated opinions of their **leaders** or to gratify their pride by the formation of parties.

(7) For what gives you the right to make such a judgment? What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if everything you have is from God, why boast as though it were not a gift?

- If any teacher has a superior **gift**, it's a **gift from God** and is not something to **boast** about.

(8) You think you already have everything you need. You think you are already rich. You have begun to reign in God's kingdom without us! I wish you really were reigning already, for then we would be reigning with you.

- The Corinthian church argued that they had **everything** they **needed**. They had all of the gifts of the Spirit. Paul says sarcastically that they are **rich**. Actually, they were filled with intellectual pride like the church at Laodicea in Revelation 3:17.

- Paul then **wishes** that that they were **reigning** so they could **reign** with him. Reigning was still in the future.

(9) Instead, I sometimes think God has put us apostles on display, like prisoners of war at the end of a victor's parade, condemned to die. We have become a spectacle to the entire world -- to people and angels alike.

- Paul wonders if **God** has put the **apostles** on **display** like when a victorious Roman general parades his conquered **prisoners** and has a small group that will be condemned to death before the beasts in the arena. He feels **put** on display before **people** and **angels**.

(10) Our dedication to Christ makes us look like fools, but you claim to be so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are so powerful! You are honored, but we are ridiculed.

- The Corinthian believers needed a wider perspective:
 1. Paul looked like a **fool** while they **claimed to be wise**.
 2. Paul was **weak** while they claimed to be **powerful**.
 3. Paul was **ridiculed** while they claimed to be **honored**.

(11) Even now we go hungry and thirsty, and we don't have enough clothes to keep warm. We are often beaten and have no home. (12) We work wearily with our own hands to earn our living. We bless those who curse us. We are patient with those who abuse us.

- The perks of Paul's job as an apostle:
 1. He did not have sufficient food and drinking water.
 2. Insufficient **clothes** to keep **warm** at times. Shivers!
 3. Frequent **beatings** from enemies and authorities.
 4. He was itinerant and **homeless**.
 5. He **worked** to provide his own **living**.
 6. When someone **curses him**, he **blessed** them as a response.
 7. When he was **abused**, he was **patient** with the abusers.

(13) We appeal gently when evil things are said about us. Yet we are treated like the world's garbage, like everybody's trash -- right up to the present moment. (14) I am not writing these things to shame you, but to warn you as my beloved children.

- Paul did not return **evil** for **evil**. Undoubtedly he could, but he followed Christ who taught otherwise:

But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.... (Matthew 5:44 NKJV)

His kindly answers did not change his critics but instead they treated him like **garbage**. This wasn't only in the past, but the **present** as well.

- Paul brought up his ill treatment as a **warning** to the Corinthian brethren whom he regarded as **beloved children**.

PAUL HAS A RIGHT TO CORRECT THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH

(15) For even if you had ten thousand others to teach you about Christ, you have only one spiritual father. For I became your father in Christ Jesus when I preached the Good News to you.

- The number of **fathers** each person has is not debatable. Paul establishes that he is their **spiritual father** because he brought the **Good News** to them and they accepted **Christ**.

(16) So I urge you to imitate me. (17) That's why I have sent Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord. He will remind you of how I follow Christ Jesus, just as I teach in all the churches wherever I go.

- Because he qualifies as their father, Paul can urge them to **imitate** himself. He sent **Timothy**, his **child in the Lord**,

to **remind** them of how Paul **follows Christ**. It is the standard conduct wherever Paul **goes**. In the highest sense, we are to imitate God (Ephesians 5:1), but in a human sense, they could imitate Paul, his humility, faithfulness, self-sacrifice and hard work.

(18) Some of you have become arrogant, thinking I will not visit you again. (19) But I will come -- and soon -- if the Lord lets me, and then I'll find out whether these arrogant people just give pretentious speeches or whether they really have God's power.

- The big talkers were saying that Paul would **not visit** them **again**. But Paul says he is returning to Corinth **soon** if the **Lord** allows it. He will test these **arrogant** talkers and see if they **have the power from God**.

(20) For the Kingdom of God is not just a lot of talk; it is living by God's power. (21) Which do you choose? Should I come with a rod to punish you, or should I come with love and a gentle spirit?

- **God's Kingdom** is not arrogant buffoons **talking** big but the **power of God** changing lives from failure to success.
- Their choice: Either they could end the big talk and get down to business or Paul would come with a **rod** to **punish** them. Otherwise, he could come with **love and a gentle spirit**.

IMMORALITY IN THE CHURCH MUST BE CONFRONTED

(5:1) I can hardly believe the report about the sexual immorality going on among you -- something that even pagans don't do. I am told that a man in your church is living in sin with his stepmother.

- The church leaders had written to Paul about some matters, but had not mentioned this sordid scene. He had to learn about it through public **report**. The big talkers had not revealed this disgusting affair.

- Paul was astounded at the extent of **immorality** in one **man's** life. Deuteronomy 27:20 forbids it in the law of Moses. It surpassed the **pagans**. Someone was **living in sin** with his **stepmother**. She was probably a **pagan** woman and was not rebuked.
- Even Corinth, the moral cesspool that it was, would be scandalized by such wickedness.

(2) You are so proud of yourselves, but you should be mourning in sorrow and shame. And you should remove this man from your fellowship.

- The church was **proud** of this diversity. They should have been in **mourning** and **ashamed** of tolerating the affair. The sinning man should be **removed** from their **fellowship**.

GET THE IMMORAL MAN OUT OF THE FELLOWSHIP

(3) Even though I am not with you in person, I am with you in the Spirit. And as though I were there, I have already passed judgment on this man (4) in the name of the Lord Jesus. You must call a meeting of the church. I will be present with you in spirit, and so will the power of our Lord Jesus.

- Paul can direct this case from where he is dictating his letter. His mind is made up. "Call the **church** together and I **will be** with **you in spirit and so will the power of the Lord.**"

(5) Then you must throw this man out and hand him over to Satan so that his sinful nature will be destroyed and he himself will be saved on the day the Lord returns.

- The church is to remove the man from their fellowship and **hand him** over to **Satan** for the **destruction** of his **sinful nature**. **Satan** is the **destroyer** of people.

(6) Your boasting about this is terrible. Don't you realize that this sin is like a little yeast that spreads through the whole batch of dough?

- It's **terrible** that the church was **boasting** about this obvious **sin**. This kind of winking at **sin** will spread to other people in the fellowship. Willful **sin** will be passed from person to person until the whole church is infected.

(7) Get rid of the old "yeast" by removing this wicked person from among you. Then you will be like a fresh batch of dough made without yeast, which is what you really are. Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us.

- **Get rid** of the evil so they will be like a new **batch of dough** without the **old yeast** of sin. That condition matches what God wants them to be. Then their natures will match their name and the conduct will match their creed.

(8) So let us celebrate the festival, not with the old bread of wickedness and evil, but with the new bread of sincerity and truth.

- Paul is not speaking of the *Passover* or the *Lord's Supper* as the **festival**, but the *Christian life* itself. Our whole existence is to be a **festival** of joy.

(9) When I wrote to you before, I told you not to associate with people who indulge in sexual sin. (10) But I wasn't talking about unbelievers who indulge in sexual sin, or are greedy, or cheat people, or worship idols. You would have to leave this world to avoid people like that.

- Evidently Paul had written to the Corinthian church in the past, but we do not have that communication. God did not choose it for the canon of Scripture.
- So this is not their first strong warning about allowing immoral conduct in the church fellowship.

(11) I meant that you are not to associate with anyone who claims to be a believer yet indulges in sexual sin, or is greedy, or worships idols, or is abusive, or is a drunkard, or cheats people. Don't even eat with such people.

- Paul clarifies: they are not to associate with willful sinners in the congregation, don't even make them welcome at their dinners.

(12) It isn't my responsibility to judge outsiders, but it certainly is your responsibility to judge those inside the church who are sinning. (13) God will judge those on the outside; but as the Scriptures say, "You must remove the evil person from among you."

- Paul wants the church to **judge sin** within. There is a definite sequence. First we *overlook* evil, then we *permit* evil, then we *legalize* evil, soon we *celebrate* evil and then come to the place that those who *call* it evil are persecuted. Believers had better take action early on.

RESOLVING DISPUTES IN THE CHURCH

(6:1) When one of you has a dispute with another believer, how dare you file a lawsuit and ask a secular court to decide the matter instead of taking it to other believers!

- Deep differences among people are to be expected because we are all free moral agents. Within the church, we must have a mechanism for resolving disputes without going to a **secular** court.

(2) Don't you realize that someday we believers will judge the world? And since you are going to judge the world, can't you decide even these little things among yourselves?

- A future role of believers will be to **judge the world** and so the Corinthian church should devise a plan of resolving their differences.

(3) Don't you realize that we will judge angels? So you should surely be able to resolve ordinary disputes in this life. (4) If you have legal disputes about such matters, why go to outside judges who are not respected by the church?

- To expand future judgment even further, believer will **judge angels**.

(5) I am saying this to shame you. Isn't there anyone in all the church who is wise enough to decide these issues? (6) But instead, one believer sues another -- right in front of unbelievers!

- Is a church that boasts of so much **wisdom** and spiritual accomplishment, surely there is someone who can settle disputes so you don't need to take your disputes to **unbelievers** at secular courts.

(7) Even to have such lawsuits with one another is a defeat for you. Why not just accept the injustice and leave it at that? Why not let yourselves be cheated? (8) Instead, you yourselves are the ones who do wrong and cheat even your fellow believers.

- For the believer, **justice** is not paramount. The top principle is peace. So why not plan to be a victim of **injustice**?

FALLING SHORT OF INHERITING THE KINGDOM

(9) Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, (10) or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people -- none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God.

- This issue of accepting injustice is related to our eternal **inheritance**. While we are citizens of the **Kingdom** after being baptized into Christ, we don't receive our eternal **inheritance** until later.

- Items that will keep believers from their inheritance include **sexual** sin, idolatry, **adultery** (because of breaking the marriage contract), **homosexuality**, **thievery**, **greed**, **drunkenness**, **abuse** of others and **cheating** (like the injustice that is under discussion).

(11) Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

- Some of the believers at Corinth had one or more of these sins in their past, but they have been **cleansed** and **made holy** by **calling on the name of the Lord and by the Holy Spirit**.

(12) You say, "I am allowed to do anything" -- but not everything is good for you. And even though "I am allowed to do anything," I must not become a slave to anything.

- Marginal believers stress their freedom to do whatever they want to, but Paul examines this view. He warns them of damage to themselves and even becoming a slave to something.

(13) You say, "Food was made for the stomach, and the stomach for food." (This is true, though someday God will do away with both of them.) But you can't say that our bodies were made for sexual immorality. They were made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about our bodies.

- Our **food** and our **stomach** are a *match for now*.
- Our **bodies** and **immorality** are *not a match ever*.
- Instead our **bodies** are for the **Lord** both now and forever.

(14) And God will raise us from the dead by His power, just as He raised our Lord from the dead.

- Our bodies have purpose beyond our **death**. The evidence is that **He raised our Lord from the dead**. We will not be

disembodied spirits for eternity. Instead our spirits will be reunited with our bodies and enjoy eternity forever.

(15) Don't you realize that your bodies are actually parts of Christ? Should a man take his body, which is part of Christ, and join it to a prostitute? Never!

- How are we connected to Christ? This will be revisited in chapter 12:

All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it. (1 Corinthians 12:27 NLT)

- **Paul Butler** comments on this idea:

The coming of the Holy Spirit of God and Christ to take residence in the human being involves more than understanding, acknowledging and obeying the revealed will of the Holy Spirit in the scriptures.

Apparently, it is a supranatural action on the part of God but mystical to man (that is, a spiritual reality neither apparent to the senses nor obvious to the intelligence). The difference between those who will not be raised to eternal life with Christ and those who will is the indwelling presence of Christ's Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:1-11).

The coming of Christ's Spirit to reside in us is not something we earn or merit by our perfect obedience, but it is initiated by God's Spirit because of his grace when we give him welcome by our love and faith.

(16) And don't you realize that if a man joins himself to a prostitute, he becomes one body with her? For the Scriptures say, "The two are united into one." (17) But the person who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.

- Having sex with **a prostitute** causes a believer to be one **body with her**. Paul's evidence is Genesis 2:24.

(18) Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body.

- **Run from sexual sin.**
 1. Don't view it for entertainment, or
 2. read it for escape from the present, or
 3. ponder it as a future possibility.

(19) Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, (20) for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.

- Paul reminds these brethren that they ARE a **temple** even though they live in a city of pagan **temples**. Their purchase **price** was very **high** and **God** is now their owner. Therefore their **body** must be used to **honor God** not to have pleasure with a pagan prostitute.

**YOUR BODY IS A
TEMPLE, NOT A DRIVE
THROUGH**

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