



gracefellowship

Series: Crossroads: Between Kingdom and Culture
 Title: Eternity's Effect on Sin

Date: March 24, 2024
 Passage: 1 Corinthians 6:1-20

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 6:1-20

If you knew the future would that change what you do today?

- When someone knows they are getting married in 10 months they might diet or start going to the gym
- If you know that it's going to snow you go to the grocery store and stock up on food.
- This week is Spring Break for our school systems and if you're traveling you made plans months ago when the school calendar for the year came out.

Paul is going to take the same idea and apply it to our life as followers of Jesus; he is going to tell us things about the future in hopes that we will stop living for sinful desires in the present.

Because of the way we insert chapters in our Bible it is easy to think that this chapter is disconnected from Chapter 5. In Chapter 5 Paul dealt with sins of sexual immorality in the Church at Corinth. Then in Chapter 6 he begins by talking about lawsuits among believers. But I think the two ideas are interconnected. In fact, go back and look at how chapter 5 ends.

:: 1 Corinthians 5:12-13

¹² What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside?

¹³ God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked person from among you."

When it comes to people who are claiming to follow Jesus but are living in gross, unrepentant sin, Paul instructs the Church to pass judgment on those within the Church and deal with their sin appropriately- even if that means putting them out of fellowship with the hope of the person repenting and eventually being restored.

That thought pushes us into chapter 6. Paul had been dealing with a case of sexual immorality in the church and the unrepentant nature of the hearts of the people engaging in the activity. Apparently he feared that would drive people to have disputes as to how to handle the matter and it would end up with brothers in

Christ going to court against one another. So let's look at what Paul says concerning this issue. We are going to read the full chapter again and then discuss the different things Paul addresses.

:: 1 Corinthians 6:1-20

6 If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord's people?

2 Or do you not know that the Lord's people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases?

3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!

4 Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, do you ask for a ruling from those whose way of life is scorned in the church?

5 I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers?

6 But instead, one brother takes another to court—and this in front of unbelievers!

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?

8 Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers and sisters.

9 Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men

10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

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.

12 "I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything"—but I will not be mastered by anything.

13 You say, "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both." The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

14 By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.

15 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!

16 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."

17 But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body.

**19 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;
20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.**

In verse 1 Paul is going to criticize the Church in Corinth for taking matters of dispute before ungodly judges.

What kinds of judgment will ungodly judges give?

Temporary verdicts meant to punish, not restore. The result will be greater division in the Church.

Not only that, but when we drag brothers and sisters to court what does that say to the world watching us? We are no better than they are! Paul even says in verses 5-8:

5 I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers?

6 But instead, one brother takes another to court—and this in front of unbelievers!

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?

8 Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers and sisters.

This is a terrible witness to the world of our faith in Jesus! Surely there are people wise enough in the church to deal with disputes when they arise! To help the church in Corinth, and as a result to help us today, Paul is going to point to the future to give us a bigger picture of what God has in store for us. Remember, if we knew the future how that might change our view of our current circumstances.

:: 1 Corinthians 6:2-3

2 Or do you not know that the Lord's people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases?

3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!

I'm not going to stand here and tell you that I fully understand the theological ramifications of this statement, but Paul is giving us a glimpse into the future God has for us. We will be part of God's plan to judge the world and we will also judge fallen angels. In the book of Revelation, when Jesus finishes addressing the seven churches in Asia Minor, He finishes by saying this in Revelation 3:21:

:: Revelation 3:21

21 To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on His throne.

We will rule and reign with Jesus in eternity. We have become heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. When John describes the 1000 year reign of Christ in Revelation 20 he says that he saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge alongside Jesus. If that is the case for our future reign with Jesus, how should that affect how we handle disputes in the church today?

Paul has given us the answer to that question in verse 7:

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?

Here's another place where Paul is able to point us to eternity and help us remain free from sin in the present. You may not get the verdict you want from the church. Ideally, the church should settle the dispute and restore relationship. But if the church failed to do so, Paul asked the man to trust in God's ultimate justice rather than secular judges. Here's what we miss all too often when we experience injustice in this world: God is not overlooking anything that is happening to us.

:: Acts 17:31

³¹ For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead."

Righteous justice is coming. Paul's admonishment is not to just let disputes go and act like nothing is happening. He is saying, why not suffer wrong rather than bring your disputes before unbelievers, all the while trusting the ultimate justice of God in eternity.

Now, a lot of us may hear this and think it's highly unlikely we end up in court against one of our brothers or sisters in our church. But could I take this one step further and tell you where I see this happening the most today? It's the court of public opinion! We use social media as a platform to make all our private issues public and it often gives the Church of Jesus a black eye in the culture around us. I can't tell you how many times each week I see posts of one group of Christians calling out another group of Christians and how many of those posts get shared by still other Christians to publicly shame someone that doesn't share their same theological view.

What good does it do for me or anyone else to go on social media and drag people into the court of public opinion? Do we really need to "win" that badly? Is it that important for you to have your view known and to potentially slander someone else? Wouldn't you rather be wronged than to drag the name of Jesus through the mud publicly?

The big picture Paul is trying to paint for us is to look at our lives and the injustices we perceive in light of eternity. Now he is going to turn to a second part of the conversation and again help us learn to avoid sin by seeing what Jesus has done for us as we are looking ahead to eternity with Him.

Transition

Have you ever thought about how cultural statements become part of what we believe in the church?

- Cleanliness is next to godliness
- God will never give you than you can handle
- God helps those who help themselves

Statements like these become part of how we sometimes think at the crossroads of the culture and the Kingdom. And apparently the Corinthians had adopted some bad theology that Paul had to respond to when it came to the ongoing participation in sinful practices around the city of Corinth.

Paul reminds the people in verses 9-11 that there are practices which will keep a person from inheriting the kingdom of God...and that those very practices were once engaged in by men and women now following Jesus in Corinth. So why would they ever go back to that way of life?

The answer was culture centered more than kingdom centered: "I have the right to do anything."

Culture: I have the right to do anything

Paul responds with a Kingdom ethic:

Kingdom: Not everything is beneficial

Here's how this might sound in our culture

Culture: It's okay as long as it doesn't hurt anyone else

(we use this to justify watching porn, having pre-marital sex, eating too much, drinking, doing drugs, etc...)

Kingdom: It's not beneficial for you! It hurts you!

You matter to God! He doesn't want you to live with the mentality that your personal liberties give you the freedom to go against His moral law.

There are a lot of sins that are harmful for us, but Paul is going to zero in on sexual immorality. It's a huge issue in Corinth where part of the pagan worship system involved temple prostitution. Paul is actually teeing up a topic that is going to become very clear in the next chapter and he's doing some incredible work to lay the foundation of elevating women's rights in the 1st century.

This is where Paul is going to point again to the gospel and how having a vision of the future helps us avoid sin and remain focused on the glory that is coming rather than to live for the pleasures of the moment.

:: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

12 “I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but I will not be mastered by anything.

13 You say, “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both.” The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

14 By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.

15 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!

16 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.”

17 But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body.

19 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;

20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

Talking Points:

1. You were created for relationship with God!

“The body is meant for the Lord and the Lord for the body.”

:: Psalm 24:1

**1 The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it;**

Because you were made for a relationship with God anything less than Him that you attempt to fill your life with will leave you empty and unsatisfied.

2. We are living for something beyond this life!

“By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.”

We need to think less about what joy and pleasure we can derive from this life and what treasures we can store up for ourselves in the life to come!

3. We are united with Christ; how can we partner Him with sin?

15 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! ¹⁶ 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.”

17 But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

4. You flee from things that have the power to destroy you.

“Flee from sexual immorality.” Sexual immorality is a hunter. Yet we play around with it like it won’t hurt us. Think of the lives, marriages, families and careers that have been destroyed by people engaging in sexual activity outside of marriages.

How do we avoid sin and live for Christ? Together!

Paul's answer: ¹⁹ Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you (all y'all), whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

As followers of Jesus he purchased you and through His sacrifice on the cross you were given the power to choose freedom rather than sin. It cost Jesus His life to bring you out of the culture and into His Kingdom. The Spirit of God in us empowers us to say "no" to sin and to say "yes" to Christ! When you became a follower of Jesus you joined a family and James tells us that the best way to experience freedom from sin and healing from the effects of sin is to confess our sins to one another and pray for each other. (James 5:16)

Jesus doesn't want you to live engulfed in sin. He died to set you free. Some of us have wrestled and struggled with hidden sin for a long time because we have felt too much guilt or shame to ever talk about it with someone else. But sharing the load is what will ultimately begin you on the path toward freedom from that sin.

Next Step: Today seek someone out and set up a meeting so you can share what you've been hiding and the struggle you've been carrying by yourself for too long.

Here's the last thing I want to remind us of as we close today:

Keep eternity in view as you fight against sinful temptations. What God has for us is so much better than temporary pleasures we can experience in this life.

Life Group Questions:

Before you read the passage today, pray and ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to His truth. Ask for guidance and wisdom to understand the things God wants you to do as a result of reading this passage.

Read 1 Corinthians 6 as a group.

1. What is the Holy Spirit causing to stand out to you from this passage?
2. What are you wrestling or struggling with in this passage?
3. In the sermon on Sunday we were encouraged to look at our sin and temporary pleasures in light of eternity. How does Paul encourage us to look forward to heaven in this passage?
4. How does the promise of being raised up with Christ empower us to resist sin?
5. When we read verses 19-20 we see Paul talking to the church as a whole rather than to individuals. How do we live together as temples of the Holy Spirit? Do you recognize yourself as part of something bigger- or is your faith individualized and private?

6. What do you need to do as a next step in obedience to Jesus this week based on what the Holy Spirit has said to you today?