

## 1 Corinthians 5 & 6 – Chapter Study

### I. GREETING 1:1-9

### II. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE: A CALL TO UNITY 1:10-17

### III. Main Body 1:18-16:18

#### A. *God's Way vs. the World's Way* 1:18-2:16

#### B. *Disunity* Chs. 3-4

#### C. *Immorality* Chs. 5-6

##### 1. A case of incest 5:1-8

###### a. the report v. 1

**<sup>1</sup> It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father's wife!**

Along with the report about the many *factious* that had split the church at Corinth into warring special interest groups, was some shocking news about their degraded spiritual condition.

Not only had *love* been neglected, so had *holiness*.

Some groups neglect love in their *pursuit* of moral purity.

Believers who've walked with God for a while & been delivered from immorality can sometimes forget what their earlier struggle was like.

And they show little patience or grace toward those who've just begun to walk in the Spirit.

In Corinth, that wasn't the problem – they weren't pursuing holiness at all.

They had a distorted view of grace that downplayed sin & excused immorality.

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This relaxed attitude toward immorality had grown so commonplace they tolerated a case of *incest* among them.

That Paul refers to it as “a man having his father's wife” means she is not his *biological mother*; it's his step-mother.

This was considered a moral taboo both by the pagans and in Lev. 18:8.

That Paul only deals here with the man, the woman was not a part of the church so it had no jurisdiction over her.

Now – this was simply a *wrong* relationship—even by the ultra-permissive standards of the Greeks & Romans.

It was a *scandal* in the community at large.

Instead of the church at Corinth being ashamed & taking action to distance themselves from this embarrassing relationship, they had the goofy idea it showed how tolerant & accepting they were.

###### b. their reaction v. 2

**<sup>2</sup> And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.**

As shocking as this man's sin was, what was even *more shocking* to Paul was the reaction of the Corinthians.

This guy's flaunting his sin among them ought to have moved them to the kind of mourning that marks the sorrow at the death of a loved one.

But they'd gone the other direction & were actually bragging about how broad-minded they were.

Paul says rather than giving such hideous immorality a place among them, they ought to have done all they could to expunge it.

Either praying for the man's sincere repentance, or, if he wouldn't repent, to tell him to leave.

**c. what they are to do and why vs. 3-8**

**<sup>3</sup> For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed.**

Using both his apostolic authority & role as *their* spiritual leader, Paul does what they ought to have done long before – pronounce this man's guilt.

**<sup>4</sup> In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>5</sup> deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.**

The instructions are clear.

When they have gathered together *as the church*, under the authority of Paul, they are to withdraw the spiritual protection & covering that comes from being a part of the Body of Christ from this man who refuses to repent of his sin.

The hope & goal of that action is so that the consequences of his sin, coupled with the spiritual harassment he's sure to be the target of, will bring him to his senses, and like the prodigal son came to his senses while lying in the gutter, he'll finally repent & come back to the Lord.

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In 2 Corinthians, we find out that the Corinthians followed Paul's instructions here and the man did repent and come back to Christ.

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It's unfortunate when a church has to do this with an unrepentant member, but it's necessary.

**<sup>6</sup> Your glorying is not good.**

They actually *prided themselves* on this guy's presence, thinking it showed how accepting they were. What they lost sight of is that while we're called to accept people, we're not to tolerate sin.

As long as there's evidence of a person's desire to be free of sin, we're to show loving patience & steadfast grace.

But when a person justifies, makes light, lives at peace with sin, they need to be challenged.

[Ball = Sin example]

**6b • Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? <sup>7</sup> Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. <sup>8</sup> Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.**

Throughout scripture, leaven is a picture of sin. Like pride, it puffs up with emptiness.

God told the children of Israel they were to clean all the leaven out of their homes in preparation to celebrate Passover because it was a picture of their deliverance from sin through the blood of the lamb.

Egypt was a symbol of the world, slavery a symbol of bondage to sin & death.

But Passover brought deliverance from Egypt & it's slavery.

Jesus is our Passover whose blood delivers us from this fallen world & it's slavery to sin.

If we've been saved then we ought to leave behind the sins we once enjoyed.

Paul warns in v. 6 that tolerating sin is dangerous because like leaven, it only takes a little to do great damage.

And it's the nature of sin to grow.

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Having dealt with an issue of immorality *within the church*, Paul wants to make sure he's not misunderstood & that what's he's said so far isn't applied outside the realm it ought to be.

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## 2. Moral differentiation 5:9-13

### **<sup>9</sup> I wrote to you in my epistle**

[The first one we don't have a copy of.]

**not to keep company with sexually immoral people. <sup>10</sup> Yet I certainly *did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.***

Since we don't have that first letter we don't know exactly what he said or how he worded it, but it seems they'd misunderstood him.

He'd told them *not* to hang out with the immoral, thinking they would understand that he *didn't* mean the lost, since it's *expected* they'll be immoral.

He meant they weren't to allow the immoral to *hang out with them*, as the Body of Christ.

The key to understanding this is in the phrase *keep company with*.

Paul makes a *triple compound word*, jamming the words "with – midst – mingle" all into one word.

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Here's the world [clear glass with green balls in it & a few red balls scattered in]

The green balls are the lost among whom we, the red balls, must by necessity live, work, & play.

Here's the church [a clear glass full of red balls]

People who habitually & unapologetically live like one of these [a green ball], aren't to be allowed in here.

### **<sup>11</sup> But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral,**

Someone who engages in any act of a sexual nature outside its God-ordained boundaries of marriage.

**or covetous,**

Refers to an inordinate desire for more so that there's a willingness to cheat & steal.

**or an idolater,**

A worshiper of false gods.

**or a reviler,**

This is someone who's verbally abusive, who's speech is not only profane, but constantly employed in doing harm to others.

**or a drunkard,**

Intoxicated; not in a sober mind.

**or an extortioner**

This is the person who uses force on others to control & manipulate them.

It might be the threat of violence, or something as subtle as a fear of being gossiped about.

Whatever form it takes, it's coercing someone to *take advantage* of them.

**— not even to eat with such a person.**

When someone makes a claim of being a follower of Christ but their lifestyle stands in unabashed contradiction to that claim, believers are not to extend the welcome of fellowship to them.

Remember that eating together in that culture was a sign of acceptance & social intimacy.

**<sup>12</sup> For what *have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside?* <sup>13</sup> But those who are outside God judges. Therefore "*put away from yourselves the evil person.*"**

It is not our responsibility to judge the lost; God will do that.

BUT – we are *all* to take concern for the quality of our corporate walk with God as His people.

We're called to holiness because God is holy & we've been reconciled to Him.

Therefore, sometimes it becomes necessary to exercise a little housecleaning and remove that from our midst that brings corruption.

Paul quotes from Deut. in v. 13. 8 times in Deut. Moses tells the people of God to take specific, action to root out from among them those who refuse to repent.

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### 3. Going to court 6:1-6

Now Paul turns to deal with another issue that was proving to be a tragic embarrassment to the church at Corinth.

**<sup>1</sup> Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints?**

As the church had broken up into warring factions, some of the individual members had sued one another over personal matters.

More than likely these were business squabbles, since the courts would not have been concerned over religious differences or social arguments.

They had to be matters over which the civil courts had jurisdiction.

But Paul sees their litigiousness as a serious breach of spiritual etiquette.\

Why go for a verdict to a court governed only by the wisdom of this world when as believers they had access to the court & counsel of God?

**<sup>2</sup> Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? <sup>3</sup> Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?**

Paul looks ahead to the end of the age when the Church is revealed in all her glory as the eternal companion *of* & co-regent *with* Christ.

We'll be the agents of His earthly rule during the Millennium & will participate in the evaluation of the angels that takes place later.

So, seeing that they will rule & judge on the basis of God's Word & will, which was made known by the Spirit to them now, how is it that they weren't able to take care of their problems themselves?

This would be like Emeril Lagasse catering his anniversary by *Jack in the Box*.

Jeff Gordon having *Econo Lube* service his NASCAR.

It would be like Andrea Bocelli hiring *William Hung* to sing at his wife's surprise birthday party.

Dumb!

**<sup>4</sup> If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge? <sup>5</sup> I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren? <sup>6</sup> But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers!**

Paul is appalled by the *apparent lack* of anyone at the church at Corinth that isn't caught up in the dissension & who demonstrates the maturity & wisdom to adjudicate the minor disputes & petty squabbles going on among them.

The church at Corinth was fairly large, yet there wasn't anyone they looked to as able to evaluate their differences in a fair way.

There probably were lots of folk who could have done so, but they body was so haughty & arrogant, they refused to submit to anyone's lead.

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Paul knows this situation was a terrible black eye to their reputation in the community and something they ought to have corrected long before . . .

### 4. Come out of immorality 6:7-11

**<sup>7</sup> Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather *let yourselves be***

**cheated? <sup>8</sup> No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren!**

Paul challenges them on the effect their disunity was having on their witness.

He says it would have been better to suffer a loss in their disputes than to keep at them to the harm it caused to their standing in the community.

Over the years, I've known several people who dropped a suit they could have easily won if they'd gone to court simply because they did **NOT** want to expose the failure of another believer before the eyes of the world.

The devil LOVES to make Christians look bad & works overtime at setting us up for a fall.

We **ought** to be able to work out the differences between us, when it's 2 believers who are at odds, within the sphere of the church & Christian arbitration.

If one of the parties **refuses** to abide by the decision, rather than going to court, the one wronged should consider just dropping the matter.

Yeah – it's not fair: but to accept such for the sake of preserving the reputation of the Body of Christ, God will abundantly reward.

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Now Paul issues an ultra-stern warning . . .

**<sup>9</sup> Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?**

Paul's theology is clear – our righteousness does not come through self-effort but is a gift of God bestowed on those who believe in His son.

But **that faith**, the **kind of belief** that results in the gift of righteousness, **produces** a change that sees a **practical outworking** of righteousness in daily life.

Those whose lifestyle never changes but remain stuck in unrighteousness prove they're not saved.

**Do not be deceived.**

Don't be hoodwinked, fooled. Don't let the devil pull the wool over your eyes.

Paul would only issue this warning if it was a common problem and one that we have a tendency to fall for.

**Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers,**

One who is disloyal to his wedding vow.

**nor homosexuals, nor sodomites,**

Without becoming too specific, these 2 terms refer to both manifestations of homosexuality, the dominant & the passive.

**<sup>10</sup> nor thieves,**

These aren't your average run-of-the-mill breaking & entering kind of thieves; these are con-men; confidence men who embezzle from & swindle those they've cultivated to that end.

**nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup> And such were some of you.**

The key word being – “were.” All this stuff is past tense now.

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

So – there's **no way** they can **continue** in those things.

If they do – they will **NOT** receive the reward of heaven.

## **5. The body belongs to God 6:12-20**

### **a. moderation 6:12**

**<sup>12</sup> All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.**

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Paul quotes some of the slogans that informed life in Corinth but had unfortunately been adopted by the church too.

The first slogan was, “Everything’s permissible” or as it’s translated here, “All things are lawful.”

What this meant to the average Corinthian is that because they believed the physical realm was unalterably evil while the spiritual realm good, it didn’t matter what you did physically because your body was already condemned & the spirit was not effected by what happened to the body.

So they justified *everything*.

The church at Corinth had retained this slogan saying that grace had liberated them from a life of rules, so everything as permitted.

Paul calls for balance. He knew that liberty could turn to license if it was over-used.

Just because something was allowable did not mean it was *profitable*.

And since Paul’s whole life was about wanting to remained in intimate communion with God & of maximum usefulness to the Spirit, there were lots of things he’d chosen to lay aside because they were distractions.

### **b. flee sexual immorality 16:13-20**

Another slogan bandied about Corinth was . . .

#### **<sup>13</sup> Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods,**

They weren’t really talking about eating – this was a euphemism for sex!

In other words, just as food was for the belly & the belly for food, certain *other* body parts were for sex, & sex for those parts – and in just as casual a way as people ate, they ought to so consider sex, the Corinthians argued.

But Paul adds -

**but God will destroy both it and them.**

No – you can’t just do whatever you want to or with the body without consequences.

It’s not automatically & unalterably evil. It’s the creation of God and belongs to Him.

If it’s used for evil, then it will be judged.

**Now the body is not for sexual immorality**

Catch this -

**but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.**

I can’t tell you how absolutely mind-blowingly revolutionary this was for the Greek mind.

They seriously thought the body was corrupt & unredeemable, so they either totally ignored it and treated it with utter disdain, denying every desire, or they indulged it & became numb to guilt.

Paul says our body belongs to God. He created it and at the cross he redeemed it.

#### **<sup>14</sup> And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power.**

This meat suit we live in now, and that is a part of us, will one day be transformed into a new body fit to enjoy all the pleasures & glory of heaven.

#### **<sup>15</sup> Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?**

Simply stated & simply applied – your body, my body is meant to be the earthly manifestation of Christ.

He is the head but we are the hands, feet, legs & arms.

**Shall I then take the members of Christ and make *them* members of a harlot? Certainly not! <sup>16</sup> Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body *with her*? For “*the two*,” He says, “*shall become one flesh.*” <sup>17</sup> But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit *with Him*.**

The act of sexual intimacy was part of God’s plan to deepen & express intimacy between a husband & wife.

It is a profoundly spiritual event. It cannot be reduced to a mere physical act.

When a man & woman unite physically, a spiritual bonding takes place.

So . . .

**<sup>18</sup> Flee sexual immorality.**

Run away from it. Don't hang around & play chicken with lust.

Don't flirt seductively with that cute guy.

Because sexual sin presents a unique problem -

**Every sin that a man does is outside [*besides, as in incidental to*] the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.**

Paul means the body here as above – a part of one's *self*.

Sexual sin is unique because it's a sin we commit against ourselves; it effects us on a profoundly deep, personal level.

In Proverbs 6:32 Solomon said,

**Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; He who does so destroys his own soul.**

We don't really have time to go into the depths of this tonight but it all has to do with this issue of intimacy.

In intimacy, there's an *exchange of selves*, souls, & persons.

When you're genuinely intimate with someone you give a part of yourself to the other & they give a part of themselves to you.

This is why God intends such intimacy to really only exist in our relationship with Him and between a husband & wife.

Because when you give yourself away, you mate stays & is committed to you to hold & treasure that gift, to protect & nurture it.

And this is why divorce is so incredibly painful; we feel like we're being torn apart, because on a soul level, we are – literally!

There simply is no such thing as guiltless, casual, no commitment sex.

A man or woman might fool themselves into thinking they can reduce it to that level but they will eventually become a hollow shell incapable of having anything like a real, fulfilling relationship because they've given themselves away to many others who took the gift & ran off.

**<sup>19</sup> Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? <sup>20</sup> For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.**

Another important reason we can't dally with sexual sin is because Jesus didn't just shed his blood to ransom our spirit.

His blood atones for all sin and redeems all creation, including our bodies – they belong to Him so we must not surrender them to sin.

Rather, we ought to GLORIFY God in our bodies!