

1 Corinthians 6B (2013)

- Speaking as a father, I can say there are times when you have to pick your battles with your children
 - When your kids are acting up, sometimes we'll let a few things go by without chastising because we don't have time or energy for every issue
 - Sometimes, our kids can't bear to hear all the things they were doing wrong
 - We have to space those critiques out a little bit
 - But there are other times when our concerns are serious enough that we can't overlook them
 - As hard as it may be, our obligations as parents require we walk our children through their errors
 - Of course, we do this to encourage them into better behavior and away from the consequences of poor judgment
- Paul was the father of faith to the Corinthians
 - He brought the Gospel and founded the church
 - So it falls to him to admonish the church in the face of their repeated errors
 - It's really remarkable how many things were amiss in this one church body
 - It's a reminder of how far off a church can go when it's not guided by the word of God and good leadership
 - So far, Paul has corrected the church for its prideful associations, for tolerating immorality in the church body while failing to hold believers accountable within the church
 - We can also see how one error contributes to another
 - A prideful, arrogance church led to tolerating sin among the members
 - A willingness to tolerate sin leads to a failure to hold church members accountable in the church

- A failure to hold members of the church accountable leads to taking those disputes outside the church body, etc.
- So last week we learned that the proper course for a Christian is to resolve disputes with brothers or sisters in the church
 - We ended in v.7 where Paul said the believer should rather be defrauded by a brother than take that one to a public court
 - Our witness and our eternal reward is worth more than anything we could gain in this world
 - To complete that thought, we read vs.7-8 this morning

1Cor. 6:7 Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?

1Cor. 6:8 On the contrary, you yourselves wrong and defraud. You do this even to your brethren.

- The Corinthians were losing at their own game
 - They were asking pagan judges to grant them victory over their brother in the Lord
 - Meanwhile, they were losing ground with the Judge of Creation
 - Paul says they should have rather lost the earthly contest so that they might be received with greater honor in the Kingdom
- Peter explains this point in 1 Peter 2 with simplicity

1Pet. 2:19 For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.

1Pet. 2:20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.

1Pet. 2:21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,

1Pet. 2:22 WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH;

1Pet. 2:23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously;

- We find favor with the Lord when we bear up under the sorrow of suffering unjustly
 - And when we do this we follow in the footsteps of the Lord

- We are called for this very purpose, Peter says
- To reflect Christ in our life, and we do that best when we suffer as required, whether from the world or regrettably at times from our brothers and sisters
- Peter sums up later in Chapter 3

1Pet. 3:8 To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit;

1Pet. 3:9 not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.

- We must not respond to a sinful act with another sinful act
- When we do this, we forfeit the blessing we might have received for what we suffered
- It's like we taught our kids...if you are wronged by your sibling and strike back, then the one who strikes last is wrong
- Paul is concerned by the notion that the church is harming itself in these disputes, but his primary concern remains the absurdity of believers going before sinners for judgment
 - It reflects a failure on the Christians in Corinth to appreciate how their faith had separated them from the world
 - The church apparently didn't grasp the degree of that distinction
 - So Paul puts it in perspective in the next passage

1Cor. 6:9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,

1Cor. 6:10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.

1Cor. 6:1 Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

- Paul asks the rhetorical question, do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?
 - Paul is asking the church, do you not recognize that the unbelieving world is excluded from the future we will know?

- They are on a different course
- The only reason we are still among them is because the rest of God's timeline has yet to play out, but it's only a matter of time
- Yet these are the people you seek out for approval and judgment
- Sometimes, we tend to sweep these differences under the rug, so to speak
 - We have friends, acquaintances, coworkers, classmates, neighbors, family members who haven't placed their trust in Jesus Christ
 - Since we enjoy their company or have strong attachments, naturally we tend to see the good in them
 - We prefer to think that perhaps they will be with us in the Heaven God has planned for His children
 - And perhaps they will...but only if they come to faith in Christ
 - Meanwhile, Paul says to the Corinthian church – and to us – in v.9 “do not be deceived”
 - He means don't be deceived into minimizing the profound differences between believers and unbelievers
 - Don't overlook the reality that we share nothing in common with them, spiritually speaking
 - They can't see what we see
 - They can't know what we know
 - They can't understand what we understand
 - They can't share in what we have without faith in Jesus Christ
 - It goes without saying that we hope, pray and work to see those we know and care about come to faith so they may share in these things
 - But until that happens, we cannot be deceived about who they are and who we are
 - If we become deceived, then we may be tempted to do the things the Corinthian church was doing

- We come to see unbelieving courts as a our superiors in judging disputes
 - We come to see the unbelieving world's values and achievements as our achievements and values
 - We may even begin to think that the unbeliever's behaviors can be ours as well
- That's why Paul lists so many sinful behaviors in describing the unrighteous
 - Paul says they are those who practice such things
 - The list includes fornicators – sex prior to marriage
 - Idolators – those who worship false gods
 - Adulterers – those who engage in sex outside marriage
 - Effeminate & homosexuals – both refer to homosexual behavior
 - The Greeks used different words to describe each person in a homosexual relationship
 - Both words are used here
 - Thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and swindlers complete the list
 - Paul is not teaching that anyone who commits any of these acts is automatically an unbeliever
 - Clearly, believers can be guilty of these same sins
 - Paul is speaking in broad terms of how unbelievers routinely live
 - They engage in these things as a matter of practice, while believers may slip into these behaviors from time to time
 - Perhaps John teaches this point most clearly in 1 John

[1John 3:7](#) Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous;

[1John 3:8](#) the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.

[1John 3:9](#) No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

[1John 3:10](#) By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

- Notice John repeats Paul's warning not to be deceived
 - John says the children of the devil and the children of God are obvious
 - Each will live according to his or her nature
 - Take note of these patterns, and appreciate that they often testify to spiritual realities
 - Understand that saving faith sets the believer on a new course where these behaviors should fade into the past while new ones arrive in their place
- Paul says those who live according to such behaviors, enjoying them and practicing them, are of a different sort than the Church
 - And we have been called out from them
 - We have been justified and sanctified, that is set apart, by the Spirit
 - Paul reminds the church in v.11 that their church (and every church) is made up of former fornicators, adulterers, idolators and all the rest
 - But the important word is "former"
 - By our faith in Jesus Christ, we are washed clean of those sins, whether past, present or future
 - We no longer live in the flesh; we listen to the Spirit instead
 - We are to be in the world, but not of the world as we know
 - So let's not rush back to that world when we find ourselves needing example, or expertise or guidance or judgment
- As I mentioned earlier, one bad behavior or poor judgment frequently leads to more problems, and this is true in this case as well
 - The first mistake of the Corinthian church was forgetting their faith made them fundamentally different than the world around them

- As a result, they were susceptible to far worse sin than seeking the judgment of a pagan court
- They were in danger of following the sinful behaviors of that fallen world
- This leads us to the next issue on Paul's list
 - That is the problem of engaging in sexually immoral behaviors

1Cor. 6:12 All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.

1Cor. 6:13 Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body.

- Paul introduces his response to the fourth item of concern by quoting and then changing a Greek proverb
 - The Greek philosophers always minimized the importance of the body
 - They claimed it was separate from the soul to such a degree that it mattered not what was done with the body
 - A Greek proverb said that “the body is a tomb”
 - Epictetus said “I am a poor soul shackled to a corpse”
 - So they thought anything a person wanted to do with the body was acceptable
 - Then Paul came to Corinth, and he taught that grace in Christ meant works of law did not lead to righteousness
 - Paul taught that liberty in Christ permitted, among other things, that men could eat anything they desired
 - So the Corinthian church remembered Paul's teaching as all things were lawful in Christ
 - You can see where this would lead to a problem in a Greek church
 - These Corinthian Christians took the Greek philosophical view and combined it with Paul's teaching on liberty
 - They arrived at a perverse understanding of grace

- They assumed that if the appetite of the stomach knew no restriction, then every other appetite of the body must also be permitted
- The Greek view of the body transferred into their Christian theology
 - They knew Paul taught all things were lawful, and that God would destroy this body, which Paul had also taught them
 - Therefore, they concluded in keeping with Greek thinking that whatever we do with our bodies in the meantime is irrelevant to God
 - Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die
 - Now we can understand Paul's comments in vs. 12-13 better
 - Paul reaffirms that "all things" are lawful
 - But then he qualifies it
 - We must consider the effect of our actions, not merely whether an action is lawful by itself
 - Christianity does not rely on the Mosaic Law or any other religious dogma of rules or regulations to impart righteousness – we are righteous by faith alone
 - So all choices are equally lawful in that regard, because we find our righteousness in faith, not works
 - But determining what is sin is another matter
 - We have liberty to do many things, but in the way we practice anything, it may still become sin
 - In other words, nothing a Christian may choose to do contributes or detracts his or her righteousness
 - Nevertheless, not everything we choose to do is pleasing to God
- Then Paul uses food as his example to demonstrate his point
 - At an earlier point, Paul must have taught this church that there is no spiritual significance to what they choose to eat
 - Food is food, without spiritual significance
 - Nevertheless, food has a designed purpose

- Food's purpose is to nourish the body (which is what Paul meant by stomach)
- It fulfills its purpose in making our body stronger and healthier
- On the other hand, I can take food and make it my enemy
 - We can abuse it
 - We can mistreat the body in the way we choose to eat
 - So the point is that while all food is lawful, it can still become unprofitable if we use it in a sinful way
- Paul then draws a comparison between our appetite for food and our desire for anything else
 - Just as food is intended to promote a stronger and healthier body, likewise our spiritual liberty must be used to promote a spiritually healthier life
 - Which leads Paul to say in verse 13 that the body is not for immorality but for the Lord's glory
 - The Lord indwells us for His pleasure and purpose
 - So our body is for the Lord's use and glory
- So apparently, the Corinthian church was engaging in sexual immorality under the guise of all things are lawful
 - And this was the fourth issue Chloe reported to Paul – members of the church engaging with Greek temple prostitutes

1Cor. 6:14 Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power.

1Cor. 6:15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be!

- Paul begins his admonishment by challenging the Greek notion that the body matters not to God
 - Paul says in v.14 that the Father raised the dead body of Christ
 - Moreover, because of our faith in Jesus Christ, the Father will raise us into new bodies as well

- So if the body mattered not to the Lord, why does He provide us with a new body in the day?
- The Greek philosophers taught that once this body died, the soul existed without a body
- But the word of God teaches that God's design is for the soul to inhabit a body and enjoy the Creation God has made for us
- So clearly if the Lord cares enough for the body to raise it anew, then we can't assume He doesn't care what we do with it in the meantime
- More importantly, Paul says in v.15 that our bodies became part of something larger called the body of Christ
 - By the indwelling of Christ's Spirit, our physical bodies have become the home on Earth for the Lord
 - So as we live in this time, we are each a part of Christ's body
 - So consider that as you may choose to engage in sin with your body in one way or another, you are dragging the Spirit along with you in that sin
- In a very real sense, you are taking Christ with you into sin
 - Obviously, Christ isn't becoming a part of our sin
 - Our sin is a choice we make alone
 - But Paul's point is still clear
 - The choices we make with our body are clearly not unimportant to the Lord
 - On the contrary, they are very important to the Lord, since He is indwelling the very bodies we are using to sin!
- Paul asks should we allow a body occupied by the Lord to be engaged with a prostitute?
 - In Greek culture, prostitution was common in religious ceremonies
 - Before the Corinthians came to faith in Jesus Christ, they would have likely worshipped in Greek temples

- And in those temples, prostitutes worked to serve the worshippers
 - Engaging with prostitutes in these temple “services” was a normal part of worshipping Greek idols
- So even after the Corinthians had come to faith in Jesus Christ, the temptation to return to the prostitutes must have been very strong
 - Apparently, some have continued to frequent these temples
 - This is the natural result of failing to see the church as set apart and distinct from the world’s views and behaviors
 - And the solution to this problem is to understand how the Lord sees such behavior, as Paul explains

1Cor. 6:16 Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, “THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.”

1Cor. 6:17 But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.

1Cor. 6:18 Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.

1Cor. 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

1Cor. 6:20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

- Paul launches into the teaching portion of his admonishment to the church, beginning with a reminder of Genesis Chapter 2
 - When a man and a woman engage in sexual relations, they are becoming one flesh, Paul says
 - Paul is referring to the words of the Lord in Genesis 2:24, where the Lord declares that men and women are intended to marry
 - And in that marriage, they bring about a relationship modeled on the relationship of the original man and woman
 - Woman was literally created out of the body of the first man, so that they were always one flesh
 - Likewise, husband and wife reunite today to become one flesh in the sexual act
 - So when a Christian unites with a prostitute, that person has taken a body already joined with the Lord and joined it again with a prostitute

- Therefore, we are engaging in a grave sin when we sin with our body in immoral acts of one kind or another
 - In a sense, we are dragging the Lord along with us as we sin
 - The church couldn't see engaging with a prostitute as simply another appetite like the stomach's desire for food
 - It carried far more serious ramifications
- In fact, in v.18 Paul says there is a distinction between immoral sins and other sins
 - Immorality means specifically sexual immorality
 - These sins stand apart from other sins, in the sense that we are using the Lord's temple in a degrading way
 - Other sins can be corrected by moderations or abstinence
 - If I drink too much or eat too much or use foul language or gossip too much, then those things can be corrected in time
 - I can repent, I can change my behavior
 - My sin may have lasting consequences, but my sin hasn't altered my spiritual relationship with others
 - But once I commit a sexually immoral act, I have joined myself to someone else in a way that can't be undone
 - I have become one flesh with someone I may never see again, and this is a serious sin Paul says
 - To be clear, Paul is not saying we are less forgiven for this sin or that our righteousness in Christ is lessened
 - The blood of Christ covers all sin
 - But any act of immorality is an offense against the temple of the Lord
 - The temple of God is a holy place, and those who sin against the temple of God are committing a serious sin
 - We are repeating the sins of the priests in Israel who employed prostitutes in the Jewish temple
 - So contrary to the philosophy of the Greek church, the Bible teaches that it matters very much what I do with my body

- It matters to God and it matters to my eternal reward
- We have been bought with a price, the price of Jesus' blood spilled on a Roman cross
- Consider that fact should you ever be tempted to sin against the temple of God with your body
 - Let us glorify the Lord with our bodies
 - Never think that these choices don't matter