

“Lawsuits and Loose Lives”

1 Corinthians 6

Hymns: #18 Now Thank We All Our God

#20 O Love That Will Not Let Me Go

Reading: 1 Corinthians 6

Charles Spurgeon said: “A man's life is always more forcible than his speech. When men take stock of him they reckon his deeds as dollars and his words as pennies. If his life and doctrine disagree the mass of onlookers accept his practice and reject his preaching.”

This was true in Surgeon's day and it's just as true today. In other words, no matter how loud we shout our verbal testimonies...they remain but a faint whisper to an unbelieving world compared to the corporate living example they see in us as believers. Yes, our actions speak louder...much louder than our words.

In this sixth chapter of 1 Corinthians, Paul continues his correctives to the boasting baby believers at Corinth based on the report he had received. And that report was not good. He dealt with their divisions in the first four chapters and in chapters five and six he is dealing with the fruit of those divisions...their actions; their deeds. Today we will see what a terrible testimony was being presented by the Corinthians in the airing of their dirty laundry in public, forgetting who they were and buying into the world's way of thinking. These are deeds reckoned as dollars compared to the pennies of their talk. To counter all this, Paul as their spiritual father, demands that public lawsuits among believers cease; that their old ways of living be forsaken; and he refutes the slogans they have adopted to justify their immoral lifestyles. I've titled this morning message “Lawsuits and Loose Lives”

1. Lawsuits Forbidden (V. 1-8) *“If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? 2Do 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? 3Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! 4Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church! 5I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? 6But instead, one brother goes to law against another--and this in front of unbelievers! 7The 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? 8Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers.*

We saw last week that the Corinthians had failed to judge the sin in their midst and instead were foolishly proud of the immoral actions of a professing believer among them. That “calcium deficiency in their spiritual backbone” is seen here too in their failure to judge between themselves the internal disputes that had arisen. Instead of working out issues of strife or disagreement between believers internally within the church, they were foolishly taking each other to the public courts. They were airing their dirty laundry before a watching and unbelieving world and as a result were wrecking their testimony of Jesus Christ, the very thing they were called to uphold as the Church.

You'll recall back in chapter 3 that when Paul used the phrase “Do you not know” that it was a diplomatic way of saying “You guys have absolutely no idea about this” before he goes on to make an absolutely true declaration. Well in this chapter alone he uses that phrase a full six times and he makes it clear in v. 5 that he is fully aware and intending to shame them by his piercing questions. He not only tells them to stop trashing their public testimony, but he also tells them why they are doing it.

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- V.2 “You guys have no idea that you are going to judge the world.” We know that reigning and ruling with Christ is the reward and inheritance of every faithful steward-believer. Since that is the case, Paul asks “are you not competent to judge trivial cases?” In other words, arguing from the lesser degree to the greater, “If you cannot sort out the trivial disputes you have amongst yourselves, how in the world are you going to judge between nations during the Millennial Kingdom reign of Christ and beyond?” It’s not light hearted Christian banter to say that “we are in training for reigning”. It is a very accurate and sobering reality.
- V. 3 “You guys have no idea that you are going to judge angels.” Again arguing from the lesser to the greater, if you cannot sort out the things of this life, how in the world are going to sort our things in the next and higher life. I wish I knew more about what “judging angels” means exactly, but the Bible doesn’t give us much detail other than to declare it. And if he has said it we can believe it, even though we may not know the exact context or the extent. Perhaps with our sanctified theological imaginations we may recall that as it was an angel (Lucifer- Satan- Devil) who first sinned and who subsequently caused man to sin. In the future then it shall be that angel and all the angels who followed him, who will in the end find themselves judged by the very men they stumbled.

Verse 4 is somewhat difficult to translate as it can equally be read as either a directive, as here in the NIV translation, or as a question which then reads “Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, do you appoint as judges men of little account (ie: unbelievers) in the church?” I think contextually the latter question is more appropriate, but either way, the point is clear: You don’t set unbelievers before you as your judges! Work it out internally!

In the US, for 2016 alone, there were 354,339 civil case lawsuits filed in the U.S. district courts with an additional 441,846 cases pending.¹ That’s a total of 796, 185 lawsuits filed. I’m not sure what the numbers were for Australia, but we clearly live in a litigation addicted world. And many of these cases are decided by a jury. Just stop and consider the composite make up of most juries today. They are for the most part made up of pagan unbelievers; men “without a cable connection”; people who have no spiritual insight and get their wisdom from television trash talk shows or the gossip mill of talk radio. This has not changed from the early days of the Corinthian church. Paul is in effect asking in v. 5-6 “You’d rather have some of these dumb bunnies sit in judgement of you to settle your disputes, than to have a tribunal of spirit filled believers; men with a “cable connection” to heaven; trusted brothers, help sort things out?” Really? You Corinthians have no idea!”

Not only was this a terrible testimony to the world externally, it was also evidence that internally the Corinthians had already been completely defeated by the enemy angel they will one day judge. They had been torn from the fabric of intertwined lives and had sought independent personal justice from an unbelieving world. We can see just how precious that fabric is by the questions Paul asks: “Why not rather be wronged?”; “Why not rather be cheated?” In other words, it’s not worth trashing your external public testimony to who Jesus Christ is and what He is doing in building His Church and it’s not worth tearing apart the internal fabric of intertwined lives...just to be right.

I can still recall the first time I felt this principle instinctively as a boy of about 10 years of age. Our television had stopped working and my dad took it to the TV repair man to fix for an agreed price. The TV repair man did fix it but something happened that meant it was going to cost more than

¹ <http://www.uscourts.gov/statistics-reports/federal-judicial-caseload-statistics-2016>.

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agreed. I can still remember sitting in the back seat of the car hearing my dad rant and rave to my mom about how he was NEVER going pay that amount and that he'd take the repairman to court if he had to. Until then he could keep the TV along with a piece of my dad's mind which he intended to give him...a piece which, I might add, he would have been better served to hold on to, for he needed all the pieces he could get. But still I remember sitting there, looking out the window and thinking to myself "Why not just pay him? Why not forget all about it? Then we could stop all this strife and just go home and watch Monday night football." Even at 10 years old and as yet still unregenerate, I instinctively valued peace and relationship even to the point of accepting being wronged. I must confess that as I have grown older I have too often repeated my dad's example rather than have that childlike faith that says "Why not rather be wronged?" But I am learning...and thankfully Jesus is still patiently teaching me. He modelled for us all the ultimate acceptance of "being wronged" at the Cross, so that we might be saved from sin and be given peace and relationship with Him.

How about you? What kind of "corporate testimony" are you exhibiting today? You and I are not likely to take one another to VCAT or Federal Court any time soon, but we can still air our dirty laundry before an unbelieving world by how we live disconnected lives apart from the spiritual fabric of lives truly knit together by the Spirit. We truly are living stones meant to be built together into a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit (Eph. 2:22; 1 Pet. 2:5-6). Do you see this? Are you committed to this? Even if you do see it and are committed to it, doesn't mean that there won't be "disputes", but it does mean that if there are, we will speak the truth in love to one another; we will welcome others questions or input; we will obey the instructions Jesus gave us in Matt. 18 about how to resolve issues internally; but what we will not do is withdraw into passive-aggressive silence or hypocrisy or the false peace that whitewashes the lack of spiritual reality which the dwelling place of God must surely have. Lawsuits are forbidden!

2. Loose Lives Forsaken (V. 9-11) *9Do 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, 10nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11And 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.*

Here is Paul's third "Do you not know"...He says, "You guys have no idea that the wicked will not inherit the Kingdom of God." Paul's previous two "Do you not know" drew the Corinthians' attention to their glorious future position as reigning and ruling with Christ. Knowing the reality of their future position should have had a strong and purifying effect on how they were living in the present. But there was an ignorant gap between how they were presently living and their future position. This gap was created largely by their acceptance of the world's ways and the cultural moment's slogans of their day.

Paul said in v. 9 "Do not be deceived". In other words, "If you think you can live however you want in the present and expect to arrive at that glorious future state, you are sadly mistaken...actually you are deceived". The list of sins that marked the cultural moment of the day in Corinth and which was deceiving some of them is not really any different than today. Here in Australia and in many parts of the world, homosexuality has been normalized and same sex marriage has been legalized...and for many of us it has been shocking to witness this sinful tsunami and it's flooding into the professing church. But we must remember, this is nothing new. It's just the same old sin, driven by the same old deceiver, dressed up in 21st century tolerance. Homosexuality was especially characteristic of

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Greco-Roman society. Plato lauded homosexual love in his work “The Symposium” (181B); fourteen of the first fifteen Roman emperors were homosexual or bisexual; and Suetonius in his “The Lives of The Caesars” 6.28, records how Nero married the boy Sporus in 64 AD.² The contemporary historian Tacitus described Nero as “corrupted by every lust, natural and unnatural”. Even this historian in decadent Rome had trouble concealing his disgust: “The emperor, in the presence of witnesses, put on the bridal veil. Dowry, marriage bed, wedding torches, all were there. Indeed everything was public which even in a natural union is veiled by night.”³ (p.15) Yes...that means what you think.

Nero has made a comeback in our day, and we need to recognize, just as the Corinthians needed to recognize, that there can be no acceptance of a “cultural-moment-created-gap” between our future position and our present conduct as Christians. If there is, Paul is saying you can be certain that you have been deceived.

In order to remove this sinful gap, notice how Paul points the Corinthians to the past, the present and future. He says in v. 11 “And that is what some of you **were**”. In the past some of you were just like this. But **now** you have been washed, sanctified and justified in the name of Jesus Christ. This is a Trinitarian present that we stand in for we are now Washed by the Spirit (Titus 3:5- “He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit”); Sanctified in the Son (1 Cor. 1:2 “...sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy...”); and Justified before the Father (Rom. 8:33 “Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.”). And notice the future aspect. In the future we **will** judge the world and angels. Paul does one more thing in this chapter to try and remove this gap that the Corinthians were living with. He is going to blow up the cultural moment’s slogans which the Corinthians were using to defend their present sinful conduct and doing so under the guise of Christian liberty.

3. Liberty Slogans Refuted (V. 12-20) *12“Everything is permissible for me”--but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible for me”--but I will not be mastered by anything. 13“Food for the stomach and the stomach for food”--but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 14By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. 15Do 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! 16Do 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.” 17But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. 18Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. 19Do 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; 20you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.*

In this last section we see three distinct slogans that the Corinthians were going around quoting and thinking which they used to defend their immorality and worldliness.

Slogan #1: “Everything is permissible for me” v. 12

Everything is permissible for me; I can do what whatever I want; I have liberty and no one can tell me lifestyle or choices are wrong. Sound familiar? Chuck Smith, Pastor at Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa California for over 45 years comments here saying “That is a very, very broad statement. It is as broad as any man could ever express. The Epicurean philosophy came close to it; they said, “All things are lawful for me if they bring me pleasure.” It doesn't matter what it is, as

² David K. Lowry; *1 Corinthians; The Bible Knowledge Commentary- An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty*; 1983; SP Publications (p.516)

³ David van Gend; *Stealing From A Child-The Injustice of Marriage Equality*; Connor Court Publishing; 2016; p.15

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long as it brings me pleasure it's all right to do. So you talk to them about some horrible thing you did, "Well, did you enjoy it?" "Oh, yes." "Well, it's all right as long as it brought you pleasure."⁴

This kind of Epicurean reasoning is rampant today. “Well so long as they’re happy, that’s the main thing”. “Well, so long as they’re not hurting anyone else, it doesn’t matter”. But Paul says to the Corinthians and to us, “Whoa, whoa, whoa...back the bus up Betsy...there are two big “buts” here that your little justifying slogan isn’t taking into consideration. The first “but” is that not everything is beneficial. You may be free to do some things...**but** that doesn’t mean they are really beneficial for you. There are certain laws of God in both the physical and spiritual world that you are certainly free to violate, but in the end won’t be beneficial for you. You are perfectly free to jump out of a tenth story window, but it won’t be beneficial for you when you encounter God’s law of gravity. You are also free to play trivial pursuit with your Christian life, wasting all your time, treasure and talents in meaningless worldly activity, but it won’t be beneficial for you when you stand before His judgement seat to give an account of your stewardship. The second “but” is that “I will not be mastered by anything”. In other words, to use your freedom to do something that in the end actually enslaves you is not really freedom at all. You are free to drink beer and smoke cigarettes, but alcohol and nicotine are addictive. And once you are an addict, you are no longer free, you are a slave. This principal is true for many other things in life that are not intrinsically addictive, but become addictive to us by how we use the. Food, talking, television, sleep, inactivity, daydreaming, wanderlust...we can allow all these things to master us if we’re not living by the Spirit with an eye on our future state. The true freedom Paul is thinking of here, is the freedom to NOT have to do something. It might be worth testing yourself in these areas and see just how free you are. Try a two week fast from anything you may have a doubt about and see whether you are slave or if you have true freedom.

Slogan #2: “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food” . v. 13

This slogan was not really about food, but was used to justify their immorality. David Lowry writes “They reasoned that food was both pleasurable and necessary. When their stomach signalled hunger, food was taken to satisfy them. So too, they argued, sex was pleasurable and necessary. When their bodies signalled sexual desire, they needed to be satisfied.”⁵ But Paul refutes this slogan and their faulty logic with two more “Do you not know?” in v. 15 and 16.

In v. 15 he says “You guys have no idea that your bodies are actually members of Christ Himself.” In other words, there is an objective and organic union that has been established between the incarnated Jesus Christ and the believer’s own body. In saying this he is making a clear distinction between the stomach which is perishable and the “body” as a whole, which he indicates in the previous verse is imperishable because it will be raised in resurrection life just like the body of Jesus.

1 Cor. 12: 27 says, “Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”

Eph.5: 29-30 says “After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church, for we are members of his body.”

In v. 16 Paul says again “You guys have no idea of what you are forfeiting when you engage in sexual immorality”. Just as there is an objective and organic union with Jesus in our bodies, so there is an objective and organic union with Him in our spirits. Look at v.17, “But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.” To be one in spirit with the second person of the divine Trinity and to share in the Son’s communion with the father by the Spirit is almost too glorious to even begin to

⁴ Chuck Smith; 1 Corinthians 5 and 6; C2000 Series; https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/smith_chuck/c2000_1Cr/1Cr_005.cfm

⁵ David K. Lowry; 1 Corinthians; *The Bible Knowledge Commentary- An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty*; 1983; SP Publications (p.516)

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comprehend. But that is exactly what the Corinthians had no idea about and were in fact forfeiting for the temporal satisfying of their fleshly lusts. They were acting like Esau who despised his birth right, (Gen. 25:34) selling it for a mere bowl of stew to satisfy the immediate cravings of his stomach. They should have been acting like Joseph who, when confronted with the lustful temptations of Potiphar’s wife, “ran out of the house” (Gen. 39:12). In fact it is this very image that I believe Paul had in mind when he tells the Corinthians in v. 18 to “Flee from sexual immorality”. Flee, just like Joseph!

Slogan # 3 “Every sin a man commits, is outside his body”. v.18b

At first glance it’s not apparent that this was actually another slogan being bantered around by the Corinthians. But when we consider that the word “other” in v. 18 is not in the original Greek, but is an addition by the translators in many versions, the KJV and NKJV being exceptions, and when coupled with the fact that the construction is similar to that in v.13⁶ about everything being permissible, it is very likely that the Corinthians were justifying their immorality with this slogan. But Paul refutes this thought with his sixth “Do you not know”. In effect he says “You guys have no idea about the fact that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. You may think every sin you commit is outside your body, but the fact is when you sin sexually, you are actually sinning against your body. A body that doesn’t even belong to you; and a body that is indwelt by the Holy Spirit.”

We spoke two weeks ago about the importance of stewardship and here is another case in point. V. 19-20 says “You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.” We remember that a steward is not the owner of things, he only the one responsible to manage the things entrusted to him; things which actually belong to someone else. Just as “our money” is not really ours but God’s and He has apportioned an amount to us to steward on His behalf and towards His purposes until He returns or calls us home...so too “our bodies” are not really ours but God’s. He owns our bodies by way of creation and by way of purchase; a very costly purchase that required the death of His only begotten Son Jesus Christ. God has apportioned to us a body to be a steward of. Paul summarizes this stewardship with the final sentence of this chapter: “Therefore, honor God with your body.”

Contextually, for the Corinthians to honor God with their bodies meant recognizing that going to the temple prostitutes of Aphrodite like going through the Drive Through at MacDonald’s every time they felt hungry had to stop. They were sinning against both their individual and corporate Body and Temple of the Holy Spirit. Eph. 4:30 says “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” They were grieving the Spirit and sinning against Christ’s own body.

Applicably, for most of us today, to honor God with our bodies is more likely going to mean dealing with the second slogan the Corinthians were touting: “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food”. For most of us, this slogan really is about food and not immorality. In 2014-2015, a staggering 63.4 percent of Australian adults were overweight or obese -- well over half of our nation's population.⁷ Even when we take out those who have medical conditions as the cause, the number is still overwhelming and points to a particular sin; a sin that many Christians today do not consider a sin, but one which from earliest times headed the list of the eight deadly vices. Do you know what sin I’m referring to? That’s right...gluttony. Gluttony is a sin folks and one that holds many people in

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2016/02/24/australia-obesity-statistics_n_9154422.html

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slavery. And the only weapon available to conquer gluttony is self-control. But the problem is you and I don't have it. Self-control actually belongs to the Holy Spirit alone and is one the fruits He bears in our lives when we cease grieving Him and desire to honor God with our bodies.

Phil. 3:18-19 says “For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame.”

To be a careless steward of your body; to give into the sin of gluttony; to make your stomach your god...is to live as an enemy of the cross and to glorify that which is actually shameful. I didn't make this up. This is what God's word says.

Getting on top of, and staying on top of gluttony for me has meant that for a number of years now, I have kept track every single day of what my eating and exercise has been. I made a daily calendar table which I populated with things I sensed I needed to stay away from and a place to log the number of Kms I walked and the weights I lifted. It's taped inside the kitchen cupboard and every day, I mean every day, I make an honest evaluation of how I went. If I got up in the middle of the night and ate a bowl of cereal, for me that's a fail, and so a “black dot” goes on my chart. The goal is keep black dots off my chart. This discipline of visual management and daily self-assessment has been one of the key ways in which the Holy Spirit helped me shed 10 kgs and keep it off. It's not been the chart, but the Spirit...but equally, it's not been the Spirit without the chart.

I don't want to finish this message in a “Tony Robbins rev-up-self-help” fashion, but I do want to encourage you ask yourself, “Am I honouring God with my body as a steward of that which does not belong to me?”

Corinth had its slogans and the boasting baby believers at Corinth had bought into them. Can you think of any slogans in circulation today where you live? I hear several...slogans which have crept into the lives of churches and believers...slogans that misuse and misapply words such as tolerance, equality and not judging. The Word of God calls us to examine these slogans, see them for what they are, and unlike the Corinthians, to actually “have an idea” about them.

We began this message with Spurgeon's quote, “A man's life is always more forcible than his speech.”

So how can we apply this chapter to our life, and not just our speech?

1. Let us seek to be built together as living stones and sort out our disputes in house, by speaking the truth in love.
2. Let us really be in “training for reigning” by removing every gap we see between our present character and deeds and that of our future state.
3. Let us honor God with our bodies and how we deport them in dress and conduct before a sinful unbelieving world.