

Consider Lost Sinners ([1 Cor. 6:1-8](#))

The church at Corinth was rapidly losing its testimony in the city. Not only did the unsaved know about the immorality in the assembly, but they were also aware of the lawsuits involving members of the church. Not only were there sins of the flesh, but also sins of the spirit ([2 Cor. 7:1](#)).

The Greeks in general, and the Athenians in particular, were known for their involvement in the courts. The Greek playwright Aristophanes has one of his characters look at a map and ask where Greece is located. When it is pointed out to him, he replies that there must be some mistake—because he cannot see any lawsuits going on! However, the United States is rapidly getting a similar reputation: over 200,000 civil suits were filed in the federal courts in one recent twelve-month period. Nearly 1 million lawyers (their number is increasing) are handling them. In one year, more than 12 million suits were filed in the state courts.

Paul detected three tragedies in this situation. First, *the believers were presenting a poor 588testimony to the lost*. Even the unbelieving Jews dealt with their civil cases in their own synagogue courts. To take the problems of Christians and discuss them before the "unjust" and "unbelievers" was to weaken the testimony of the Gospel.

Second, *the congregation had failed to live up to its full position in Christ*. Since the saints will one day participate in the judgment of the world and even of fallen angels, they ought to be able to settle their differences here on earth. The Corinthians boasted of their great spiritual gifts. Why, then, did they not use them in solving their problems?

Bible students are not agreed on the meaning of Paul's statement in [1 Corinthians 6:4](#) Some think he is using a bit of sarcasm: "You are better off asking the weakest member of your church to settle the matter, than to go before the most qualified unsaved judge!" Others take the phrase "who are least esteemed in [or 'by'] the church" to refer to the pagan judges. Or it may be that Paul is saying that God can use even the least member of the church to discern His will. The result is still the same: It is wrong for Christians to take their civil suits to court.

Sometimes there are "friendly suits" that are required by law to settle certain issues. That is not what Paul was referring to. It seems that the church members were "at each other's throats," trying to get their way in the courts. I am happy to see that there is a trend in our churches today for Christian lawyers to act as arbitrators in civil cases, and help to settle these matters out of court.

There was a third tragedy: *the members suing each other had already lost*. Even if some of them won their cases, they had incurred a far greater loss in their disobedience to the Word of God. "Now, therefore, there is utterly a fault among you" ([1 Cor. 6:7](#)) can be translated, "It is already a complete defeat for you." Paul was certainly referring to our Lord's teaching in [Matthew 5:39-42](#). Better to lose money or possessions than to lose a brother and lose your testimony as well.

Over the years of my own ministry, I have seen the sad results of churches and church members trying to solve personal problems in court. Nobody really wins—except the devil! The Corinthians who were going to court were disgracing the name of the Lord and the church just as much as the man who was guilty of incest, and they needed to be disciplined.

I recall a ministerial student who phoned me to tell me he was going to sue his school. Apparently the administration would not allow him to do something he felt was very necessary to his education. I advised him to "cool off," talk to his faculty counselor, and get the idea out of his mind. He took my advice and in so doing not only avoided a bad testimony, but grew spiritually through the experience.

Consider the Lord ([1 Cor. 6:9-20](#))

There was a great deal of sexual laxness in the city of Corinth. It was a permissive society with a philosophy similar to that which the world has today: Sex is a normal physical function, so why not use it as you please? Paul pointed out that God created sex when He made the first man and woman, and therefore He has the right to tell us how to use it. The Bible is the "owner's manual" and it must be obeyed.

God condemns sexual sins; Paul named some of them in [1 Corinthians 6:9](#). In that day, idolatry and sensuality went together. "Effeminate" and "abusers" describe the passive and active partners in a homosexual relationship. (Paul dealt with this and with lesbianism in [Rom. 1:26-27](#).) In [1 Corinthians 6:10](#), Paul pointed his finger at the members guilty of sins of the spirit, those suing each other because of their covetous attitude.

But God can also cleanse sexual sins and make sinners into new creatures in Christ. "Ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified" ([1 Cor. 6:11](#)). The tenses of these verbs indicate a completed transaction. Now, because of all that God had done for them, they had an obligation to God to use their bodies for His service and His glory.

Consider God the Father ([yv. 12-14](#)). He created our bodies and one day He will resurrect them in glory. (More about the resurrection in [1 Cor. 15](#).) In view of the fact that our bodies have such a wonderful origin, and an even more wonderful future, how can we use them for such evil purposes?

The Corinthians had two arguments to defend their sensuality. First, "All things are lawful unto me" ([1 Cor. 6:12](#)). This was a popular phrase in Corinth, based on a false view of Christian freedom. We have not been set free so that we can enter into a new kind of bondage! As Christians, we must ask ourselves, "Will this enslave me? Is this activity really profitable for my spiritual life?"

Their second argument was, "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats" ([1 Cor. 6:13](#)). They treated sex as an appetite to be satisfied and not as a gift *to* be cherished and used carefully. Sensuality is to sex what gluttony is to eating; both are sinful and both bring disastrous consequences. Just because we have certain normal desires, given by God at Creation, does not

mean that we must give in to them and always satisfy them. Sex outside of marriage is destructive, while sex in marriage can be creative and beautiful.

There may be excitement and enjoyment in sexual experience outside of marriage, *but there is not enrichment*. Sex outside of marriage is like a man robbing a bank: he gets something, but it is not his and he will one day pay for it. Sex within marriage can be like a person putting money into a bank: there is safety, security, and he will collect dividends. Sex within marriage can build a relationship that brings joys in the future; but sex apart from marriage has a way of weakening future relationships, as every Christian marriage counselor will tell you.

Consider God the Son (vv. 15-18). The believer's body is a member of Christ (see [1 Cor. 12:12ff](#)). How can we be joined to Christ and joined to sin at the same time? Such a thought astounds us. Yet some of the Corinthians saw no harm in visiting the temple prostitutes (there were 1,000 of them at the temple of Aphrodite) and committing fornication.

Jesus Christ bought us with a price ([1 Cor. 6:20](#)), and therefore our bodies belong to Him. We are one spirit with the Lord and we must yield our bodies to Him as living sacrifices ([Rom. 12:1-2](#)). If you begin each day by surrendering your body to Christ, it will make a great deal of difference in what you do with your body during the day.

Paul referred to the Creation account ([Gen. 2:24](#)) to explain the seriousness of sexual sin. When a man and woman join their bodies, *the entire personality is involved*. There is a much deeper experience, a "oneness" that brings with it deep and lasting consequences. Paul warned that sexual sin is the most serious sin a person can commit against his body, for it involves the whole person ([1 Cor. 6:18](#)). Sex is not just a part of the body. Being "male" and "female" involves the total person. Therefore, sexual experience affects the total personality.

Paul did not suggest that being joined to a harlot was the equivalent of marriage, for marriage also involves *commitment*. The man and woman leave the parental home to begin a new home. This helps us to understand why sex *within marriage* can be an enriching experience of growth, because it is based on commitment. When two people pledge their love and faithfulness to each other, they lay a strong foundation on which to build. Marriage protects sex and enables the couple, committed to each other, to grow in this wonderful experience.

Consider God the Holy Spirit (vv. 19-20). God the Father created our bodies; God the Son redeemed them and made them part of His body; and God the Spirit indwells our bodies and makes them the very temple of God. How can we defile God's temple by using our bodies for immorality?

The word *your* is plural, but the words *body* and *temple* are singular ([1 Cor. 6:19](#)). It may be that Paul is here describing not only the individual believer, but also the local church. Each local assembly is a "body" of people united to Jesus Christ. The conduct of individual members affects the spiritual life of the entire church.

In both cases, the lesson is clear: "Glorify God in your body!" The Holy Spirit was given for the purpose of glorifying Jesus Christ ([John 16:14](#)). The Spirit can use our bodies to glorify Him and

to magnify Him ([Phil. 1:20-21](#)). Our special relationship to the Holy Spirit brings with it a special responsibility.

So God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are all involved in what we do with our bodies. If we break God's laws, then we must pay the penalty ([Rom. 1:24-27](#)).

As you review this section, you will see that sexual sins affect the entire personality. They affect the *emotions*, leading to slavery ([1 Cor. 6:12b](#)). It is frightening to see how sensuality can get ahold of a person and defile his entire life, enslaving him to habits that destroy. It also affects a person *physically* ([1 Cor. 6:18](#)). The fornicator and adulterer, as well as the homosexual, may forget their sins, *but their sins will not forget them*.

In my pastoral counseling, I have had to help married couples whose relationship was falling apart because of the consequences of premarital sex, as well as extramarital sex. The harvest of sowing to the flesh is sometimes delayed, but it is certain ([Gal. 6:7-8](#)). How sad it is to live with the consequences of *forgiven* sin.

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Having said all this, we must also realize that there are *eternal* consequences for people who practice sexual sins. In [1 Corinthians 6:9-10](#), Paul *twice* states that people who *practice* such sins will not inherit God's kingdom. A Christian may fall into these sins and be forgiven, as was David; but no Christian would *practice* such sins ([1 John 3:1-10](#)).

Finally, in all fairness, we must note that there are other sins besides sexual sins. For some reason, the church has often majored on condemning the sins of the prodigal son and has forgotten the sins of the elder brother (see [Luke 15:11-32](#)). There are sins of the spirit as well as sins of the flesh—Paul names some of them in [1 Corinthians 6:10](#). Covetousness can send a man to hell just as easily as can adultery.

We must remember that the grace of God can change the sinner's life. "And such *were* some of you" ([1 Cor. 6:11](#)). It is wonderful how faith in Christ makes a sinner into a "new creation" ([2 Cor. 5:17, 21](#)). And it is important that we *live* like those who are a part of God's new creation. We are not our own. We belong to the Father who made us, the Son who redeemed us, and the Spirit who indwells us. We also belong to the people of God, the church, and our sins can weaken the testimony and infect the fellowship.

"Be ye holy, for I am holy" ([1 Peter 1:16](#)).