

## 1 Corinthians Class 8 Transcript

Greetings, and welcome back to FI Online. This is class number 8 in our series on Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians. We appreciate you joining us again for this particular class.

As usual, we invite you to send in any questions you may have, and we did receive one question from class number 7. So let's begin as we normally do by trying to answer that question.

Paul instructs us in 1 Corinthians 5:11 to *not keep company with a covetous brother*. How shall we understand this specific command since coveting is something to which we are all so easily susceptible? Could it be referring, for instance, to someone with an inordinate desire for wealth?

Well, first of all we should realize that there's a very big difference between having a proper desire for something and being "covetous." We're not guilty of the sin of covetousness simply because we desire to have something we don't have right now—especially if we are willing to work for it. A person can properly desire a mate, a family, an opportunity to serve, better education.

In Psalm 37 verses 4 and 5, God even encourages us to bring our desires to Him. He says:

[Psalm 37:4] *Delight yourself also in the Lord,  
And He shall give you the desires of your heart.*

*5 Commit your way to the Lord,  
Trust also in Him,  
And He shall bring it to pass.*

So there's not something wrong with having desires. That's a perfectly proper thing, and God is eager to help us to fulfill those desires when they're proper.

[2:00]

The word translated *covetous* here in 1 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 11, and also in the previous verse, is *pleonektēs*, which has the sense of "always wanting more, especially desiring what belongs to someone else." It's the person who's never satisfied and always looking for a way to gain more.

The word "always" in the New Testament has a negative connotation. It implies an evil, selfish desire for more. It certainly could apply to a desire for money, although there is another word that's generally used to describe that: *philarguros*, which is made up of *philia*, love, and *arguros*, which has to do with money. It literally means "the love of money."

There are a couple of other verses that I think also can help us put this concept of "covetousness" into a proper perspective.

Paul, pretty much shortly after this when he was in prison in Rome, in Colossians (He's writing the book of Colossians.)—in Colossians 3, in verse 5, he wrote: *Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.*

Paul likens *covetousness* with *idolatry* or "making a false god out of something that we don't have and someone else does." If someone is so consumed with desire for something he or she doesn't have, that's more than simply a normal desire to do better, and it is coveting.

In Hebrews 13 and verse 5, the author said: *Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."*

A person who cannot *be content* with what he or she has been given may conduct themselves with *covetousness*. That's more what we're talking about than simple desire. Now we certainly don't want to minimize the seriousness of coveting. After all, God has included it among the Ten Commandments because it is an attitude that can impact our lives in a variety of ways.

[4:17]

We could make a case for the idea that one of the primary motivations that Satan had for rebelling to God was his *covetousness* of God's power and position. At the same time, we must also remember that in all of this, Paul makes a difference between the person who slips into a sin or a wrong attitude, repents, and goes onward in the right way, and the person who lives with this covetous attitude all the time.

We should certainly avoid people who have a covetous outlook in life because that could—being around that attitude can tend to make us more dissatisfied with the things that we have. And I think that's especially true, as Paul brings out here, when we're talking about brethren, because our brethren are those who often have the greatest influence upon us. And if we find a brother who has that kind of a *covetous* outlook, we may be more susceptible to that influence, and therefore we should avoid that.

That, I think, is what Paul is talking about when he talks about avoiding a brother who has, among those wrong attitudes, a covetous spirit. That's the kind of thing we don't want to have.

Well, that's the only question we got for class number 7, and we, again, appreciate that. If you wish to send in a question, you can do so within an hour after the class is published, and we'd certainly be trying to answer that [in the] next class.

As always in the past and now that we're able to do this properly, we will begin with asking God's blessing on the rest of the class. So, if you would join me, please, bow your head, and we'll seek God's blessing.

[Prayer]

[6:54]

In the last class we finished all of **1 Corinthians chapter 5**, a profound chapter that deals with several issues. But especially, it deals with an issue that came up in the Corinthian Church of allowing a sinful—continuing sinful activity to go on without addressing it properly, and the need for the Church to step up and take care of that situation in the hopes that the individual who has been living in that way will repent and change his life to come back and be a part of the Church in a way that he should.

So, in covering that, we also covered the aspect of the beginning instruction Paul gives concerning the Days of Unleavened Bread. He talked about *Christ, our Passover* (We'll certainly see more of that as we go through **1 Corinthians**.) and the "keeping of the feast" and how important it is that we all do that. It wasn't simply an old Jewish festival. It was a "feast of God" for all of His people.

That leads us again to **chapter 6**, which at first may seem like it's a change in subject. But I would encourage you to think through all of this because, remember, Paul is developing a couple of themes here. He's talked about the division that exists in the Church, but, not simply the fact that division is there, but the cause—the pride that is separating people. And, he's also introduced an important principle for us that relates to that same subject, which principle we will see more fully here, and, as we move into the next set of chapters as well.

But that principle is telling us that we need to consider when we make decisions—especially decisions that relate to one another—we need to consider “what builds up,” not simply “what is legal.” We need to go beyond the letter and deal with the spirit and intent of the law as God gave it in the first place.

[8:57]

So, let’s pick it up here in **1 Corinthians chapter 6** and **verse 1**. We see in the very first words that Paul is **very** upset about something that’s going on.

[**1 Corinthians 6:1**] He says: *Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints?*

Now what are we dealing with here? Well, we’re not talking about a violation of criminal law. Citizens do not prosecute criminal law. The state prosecutes criminal law. We’re not talking about suing someone or taking them to court because they have done something illegal. We’re talking here about civil cases, civil law, and how that should be carried out. And Paul is saying that some members of the Church are literally going to court, suing other members of the Church over civil matters. Now they may feel very justified in it. There may be things going on that perhaps shouldn’t be going on. That part Paul isn’t addressing at this point right now. But at the same time, we should recognize that Paul is recognizing there is a difficulty here. There is a problem that needs to be addressed. He’s saying, “You’re taking your brothers to court. You are suing one another.”

What are we seeing? Well, again, when we look at the book of **Romans**, the apostle Paul has told us in **Romans chapter 13** that there are civil authorities established for the purpose of dealing with civil matters, and that they do carry out their responsibilities. Again, they also prosecute those who are doing wrong, who are breaking the law. But in this case, he is talking about civil law, about maybe contract violations or things along those lines.

Now, remember that under Roman law, the Jews were permitted to handle their own legal situations. They could use Jewish law, rather than Roman law, to handle their own situations within the Jewish community. The Romans allowed them to do that, and that worked best for the Jews, and it worked well for the Romans as well. They didn’t have to get involved with the ins and outs of Jewish law, which were different than Roman law. So they were happy to let the Jews handle this.

[11:27]

And at this point remember, the Romans, when they look at the Church, basically they think the Church is a sect of Judaism. Their Messiah is Jewish. Their laws are, as they would see them, Jewish laws. So, the Christians are certainly able to function under that same system; they’re able to do this. And they would have been allowed to do that. So, the issue here of “going to court” probably affected more the gentile segment of the congregation than it did the Jewish segment of the congregation. That was something that, again, was a normal part of life for them.

Many of the commentaries tell us that at this time, those who come from that—were a part of that gentile background—were used to a lot of legal discussions and court cases going on. They were very—the term we use is “litigious.” It was very common for people to sue one another.

*William Barclay* gives quite a long explanation of how this worked in ancient Athens, and the basic system continued forward. I never realized until a few years ago how extensive the Roman court systems were, but probably they were as extensive as our own systems today. And it was quite common for people to be called to court, either to go as a juror or to go and to be a part of a case.

Barclay goes on to say this—and I won't read his whole section—but he says this:

It is plain to see that in a Greek city every man was more or less a lawyer and spent a very great part of his time either deciding or listening to law cases. The Greeks were in fact famous, or notorious, for their love of going to law. Not unnaturally, certain of the Greeks had brought their litigious tendencies into the Church; and Paul was shocked. His Jewish background made the whole thing seem revolting to him; and his Christian principles made it even more so. "How," he demanded, "can anyone follow the paradoxical course of looking for justice in the presence of the unjust?"

So, Paul is saying, "How can you do this? How can you take your brother to court, and you're doing it with people who don't know the truth of God, who don't make judgments on the same basis that we do?"

He says in [1 **Corinthians 6**] **verse 2**: *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?*

Now, remember that at the second coming of Jesus Christ, God's people, who are to be joint heirs with Jesus Christ, are going to reign and judge the world with Him in that millennial Kingdom. That's what Scripture tells us.

[14:23]

But I think it's important for us to keep another concept in mind, and it's going to come up as we go further in this chapter, even in the next verse a little bit more. But I think it's very important to keep this in mind.

I think, far too often, when we read about judgment and someone being under judgment or someone being judged, we tend to think of that in very, very negative terms. We even, in our society, may say, "Don't judge me." Well, is there something negative inherently about judgment? Remember that Jesus Christ tells us that all judgment is given to Him. Is Jesus Christ negative? Is that His approach? Is He looking at everyone trying to find something wrong with them? Is that what godly judgment is about?

Well, think about other ways in which the term "judgment" is used. If you were an artist and you were taking part in an art show, there would be judges. And those judges—what's their job? What are they trying to do? Do they, at the end of the art show, point out the very worst examples of art? Do they go through and point out, "this is wrong, and that's wrong, and this should have been done differently"? No. That's not their function at all. Their function is to **reward** what's well done—to encourage it. That's judging too—first prize, second prize. And that applies in many different ways.

When we read about judging in Scripture, far too often we think negatively. Jesus Christ is given all judgment.

We are told in **1 Peter 4:17**, "*Judgment is now on the household of God.*"

Okay, is God sitting on His throne and just scowling at us, looking for something to—that we've done wrong? Of course not. God's looking on His people and, just like a parent looking at your child trying to succeed, pleased; God is pleased. He is encouraged when we do the right things.

So, judgment should not be seen as a negative thing. When it says that we, with Jesus Christ, are going to judge the world, remember the concept there is to be a leader, to be an individual who's a redeemer, to be an individual who helps people understand, "Here's the right way to do it." As we've all

read many times that passage in Isaiah, *This is the way, walk you in it.* [Isa 30:21] That's a function of a judge. So the saints are to judge the world. Will we judge when things are wrong? Absolutely! But will we also judge and encourage what's right? Yes, we will.

[16:59]

Now, in one sense, as we read back in [1 Corinthians 6] chapter [verse] 2, the saints are judging the world right now. We're looking around us, we're looking at this world, we're looking at the things that make up this world, and we're recognizing there are a number of things that are wrong. And we should judge those. We should not just sit back and accept whatever the world accepts. But instead, yes, we must judge and come to the conclusion that this that the world is doing is wrong. Yes, that's a part of what we must do. So we're judging now. That's a part of our function.

But he says, "If that's your function, if that's— ultimately, you're going to be the ones who make judgments in the future." Now, let me back up on that just a minute. What kind of judgments do you think we'll be making in the future? If everything that occurs is always very clearly delineated in God's law, then it's really not difficult to make a judgment. If someone comes to us and says, "My employer offers me a raise if I'm willing to work on Friday night," that's not a hard judgment is it? That's not one that's difficult for us to make. "No, that would be wrong. We can't do that. It doesn't matter what the reward might be—we can't work on Friday night. That's God's Sabbath day." So, it doesn't really take a lot of judgment to do that.

But in the future, in the Millennium, when Jesus Christ and the saints are reigning on the earth, none of the employers are going to come along and make that kind of an offer. We're not going to be facing that same kind of thing. But we'll face a whole new set of things. And, people are going to need guidance, and we're going to be there because we've learned to make proper judgments today. We'll be able to say: "Oh, this is the way. Go this way." We'll be able to offer that kind of thing.

But if we today never learn how to make judgments, if we today are in a situation where we always have to have everything spelled out for us, that: "The Church needs to define what we do here," then how are we ever going to learn to make judgments? We all have to make judgments in our own lives. When opportunities come our way, we have to make judgments about: "Alright, does this fit properly? Is this the right thing to do?" And, as we are told, we need to be careful that we don't judge carelessly, that we don't condemn ourselves, as Paul says in **Romans 14**, *by the things that we permit*. No, we must judge very carefully, but we make judgments today. How could God trust us to be judges in the world tomorrow, with Jesus Christ and on into eternity, if we don't learn how to make proper judgments now?

[19:51]

Now again, that brings us back to what was upsetting to Paul. How can you take what should be a matter that we decide within the Church and try to get justice from people who don't have the same standards? How could you do that?

He goes on to say, [1 Corinthians 6] **verse 3**: *Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?*

Now I've heard people sometimes express this as, "Well, in the future we're going to judge the fallen angels." Well, okay, but why would we need to judge fallen angels? They've already been judged. They're already in rebellion to God. They're already living contrary to God. What's to judge? That's

pretty clear. Angels that are in opposition to God—that are in line with Satan—that doesn't take a lot of wisdom to judge.

But what about the righteous angels? Have you ever thought about judging the righteous angels? The ones that God says, in the first part of **Hebrews [1:14]**, He created to be servants for those who are heirs of salvation. Probably we could spend a lot of time, if we were to be able to talk with one another, sharing stories about God's angelic protection in our lives—ways in which God has supernaturally intervened to protect us. And the fact is, most of the time that protection probably takes place without us even being aware of it.

It's Satan's world out there. Satan wants to destroy us, and you and I aren't powerful enough to stop him. So why isn't he destroying us? Well, part of it is because God doesn't permit it. But God also tells us He places His angels and encamps them around His people to keep them in safety. God blesses us. And many of us have looked at situations in our lives, and we could share those stories of how miraculously we have been protected from very serious problems.

As I said, most of the time we probably don't even—we're not even aware of it. We don't even know what's been happening. But those angels have been diligently working with God's people across the millennia. Does God assign specific angels to work with each of us? I don't know. Scripture doesn't tell us that. It would be interesting to think that, and in some ways, I can almost imagine that certain ones would be assigned to keep track of certain of us and make sure that we are protected and that God's will is accomplished in our lives.

[22:34]

I will tell you—I'll share this with you—that my wife tells me that she has this kind of a mental image in her mind of a poor, bedraggled angel standing before God's throne, saying, "Please don't make me go with that woman again. She is wearing me out!" We appreciate the fact that God's angels are there, and they do protect us.

But okay, when we finally are no longer hampered by the physical limitations of this life, when we can see into the spirit realm—that we can't today—and we someday come to know what those righteous angels have actually done in your life and mine, do you suppose you would judge them worthy of reward and honor? If you're a member of the family of God, if you're a son or a daughter of God in His family, you will be greater than the angels. You will have the ability to bless them. Isn't it logical that when that time comes, we're going to judge, and we're going to judge positively and fairly? We're going to be eager to reward those who so faithfully served us. I think that's a part of this aspect of judging angels too. So, don't take it in a negative way. I think there's much more.

But, again, if you and I are going to someday judge beings that are far more powerful than we are today, then as Paul says, "How can it be that you're not able to judge things that are physical, that are a part of this life?"

**[1 Corinthians 6] verse 4** *If then you have judgments (Okay, there is something that needs to be judged.) concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge?*

Does that make sense? Would you do that?

Now this could be taken a couple of different ways, and I'll refer to that in a moment. But what it tells us is that: okay, we are physical, and sometimes what seems fair to me may not seem fair to you. And you

and I may end up with a disagreement. How do we handle that? Is it going to build up the Church if I take you to court and sue you? What's it like to go to Sabbath services and sit in the same row with somebody who's suing you in court during the week? That's not going to build much unity in the Church. That's going to create all kinds of problems. And, if you know how conflict works, one of the things that people do in a situation like that is, they tell their story to their friends. And, as often happens, we only tell part of the story. Oh, it's not that we mean to lie, but there are certain things that may be more important to us than somebody else, and somebody else's perspective is a little different, and we share what we think is important. And our friends say, "Oh, well, that person is not treating you properly." We end up dividing the whole Church. People take sides over issues that really shouldn't divide the Church at all. We should be able to resolve them in other ways.

[25:45]

So, Paul asks this question: *do you appoint*—or some say it's not really a question; it's an instruction. *If you have judgments concerning things in this life, you shall appoint people who are the least esteemed by the church to judge.* In other words, even—it could be taken—again, it's kind of a difficult phrase. You read it and you say, well, is this saying that even the simplest person in the Church, the person who is converted, but maybe they don't—maybe first in Corinth, they were slaves. Maybe they were—they didn't have any authority of any kind. But they know the truth of God, and they can judge on that basis. So even though they may not be in a great position of responsibility, even they should be able to make this kind of judgment. That may be one way of taking it.

Another way it may be taken is that Paul **is** asking a question. "Does it make any sense, if you have a judgment between you and a brother, to appoint somebody outside who is not esteemed in the Church, someone who really doesn't understand? Is that really the person you would want to appoint over making judgments like this?" It's hard to say. And literally the Greek is not all that clear to us. Did the people in the Church esteem very lightly those who were judges in the world? Well, we don't find any indication of that. That doesn't seem to be true. So, it's a little awkward to say, so it can be taken a number of ways.

But keep in mind, Paul is irate that members would sue one another in this way because of the division it causes in the Church.

**[1 Corinthians 6] verse 5** He says: *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?*

It was—as one commentary puts it—"absurd" that brothers should dispute like this, yet it was the natural result where pride was dominant, where self was lifted up, where love was lacking.

When a person has that sense of pride, and they're not really thinking about what really is going to build up the Church, they're thinking about what their rights are—then they can make decisions that really are not very good decisions and that damage the Church. Paul says it's shameful. "Don't you have a wise person you could go to in the Church and say, 'My brother and I are having a problem here. We see this differently. Can you help us resolve it?'" He said, "Why aren't you doing that?" For two Christians to take one another to court, a court of unbelievers, brings shame on the Church, and therefore it's a shame to those who were involved in it.

Again, this same commentary makes the statement, and I think it fits very well. Remember how the people of Corinth thought they were really pretty wise. They thought when it comes to how to handle things, they really had a pretty good handle on things. And Paul's already shown them in the previous

chapter, “You know what—when it came to sin, you weren’t handling that properly. You needed to address that.” Now, here they are taking one another to court before unbelievers. They thought that was the wise thing. Paul says, “That’s not the wise thing. Why would you do that?”

Now, there’s no specific Scripture that says, “You are forbidden to sue one another,” but they should have been able to apply Scriptural principles to come up with a lot better solution.

[29:34]

Think, for example, what Moses was told by his father-in-law back in **Exodus 18 verses 21-22**.

He says: *Moreover—*

This is Moses’ father-in-law, Jethro, saying:

**[Exodus 18:21]** *Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. 22 And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear the burden with you.*

So even in ancient Israel—now we don’t use exactly the same system today. Those of you who camped in Big Sandy through the years at the Feast will probably remember that we did use captains of thousands and hundreds and fifties and tens and fives. We had all of that set up in the campground because it was a decent administrative system. It’s not—we’re not locked into that system for all time, but for that time it was appropriate. And, the point is that there are among you people who have the capacity to make this kind of judgment. And you should be able to choose those people based upon:

- They fear God.
- They are men of truth.
- They hate covetousness.

Those are very important characteristics, and those are characteristics that enable an individual to be a useful judge.

Now when you look at the system that God set up in ancient Israel, I think sometimes people look at this, and they say, “Oh, well, this was a system where you went to the captain of ten, and if you didn’t like his decision, you appealed it to the captain of fifty, and then the captain of a hundred, and then the captain of a thousand, and then all the way up to the Supreme Court—Moses.” That’s not really what this says.

Basically, what it tells us is, if you took this to the captain of ten, and he looked at your situation and he said, “You know what—this is a bigger issue than what I’m really able to answer. Let’s send it up the line to the next person, who may be able to answer it better than I can.” It wasn’t a system of appeals. It was a system of people recognizing there are limitations and being able to pass on those proper judgments to the people who were in a position to make them.

[31:59]

But, the system should’ve shown the people of Corinth: “You don’t go outside. You don’t go out to the legal system somewhere else. Use the people that you have who have **these** characteristics.”



Knowing—if you’ve ever dealt with the legal system of our world today, judges are **constrained** to work within the letter of the law. And there’re certainly many, many situations that probably all of us know of where it isn’t a matter of somebody being bribed or in some way compromised to make a wrong decision. But many times, the way laws are written, judges are required to make a decision based upon the law, even though anybody may look at it and say: “You know, that’s not really the way things ought to be.” If you go to the world, that’s what you’re going to get because that’s all they can do.

Instead of knowing somebody who knows **all** the intricacies of laws and statutes and what this says here or there, the characteristics of these individuals are:

- They fear God.
- They’re men of truth.
- And they hate covetousness.

What a great set of characteristics! Those individuals are in a lot better position to make judgments.

Now, of course, this carries over in the New Testament. We’ll see that when the New Testament Church began and a problem developed, it wasn’t a matter that they immediately said, “Oh, let’s go set up this Old Testament system.” No, it wasn’t that. It was a new system. We read about it in **Acts chapter 6**. And when the problem arose there, what were the people told?

**Acts 6 verse 3** *Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;*

Oh! They didn’t say, “Oh, well, you know, an accusation is here that some of the widows are being neglected in the daily ministration. Let’s sue the people who are responsible. Let’s take them to court and demand that they do things the right way.” No. They said: Okay, *seek out from among you*

1. *men of good reputation,*
2. *full of the Holy Spirit*
3. *and wisdom.*

Those principles still apply. When we have a difficulty between us, these are the things that we look for in finding somebody who can help us.

[34:26]

Now, please don’t misunderstand this chapter. This chapter is not advocating that the Church needs to set up a legal system within it, that we need to have our own internal courts and juries and judges. No. It’s saying you should be able to go to one another, and there should be people in the Church with right characteristics, godly wisdom, who can help brethren resolve these things.

But it doesn’t stop there, and Paul’s going to go on.

**[1 Corinthians 6] verse 6** *But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers!*

Brothers fighting each other and asking the unconverted to serve as judges. We are going to see a principle here again that’s very, very important. Just because a certain action is legal under God’s law, it doesn’t mean it’s ethical or it’s moral. Anytime we have to rely on the letter of some law to justify our actions, there’s something wrong—something wrong. That’s true whether it’s a relationship between two people. That’s true whether it’s a relationship within the Church at all. If we have to rely upon statutes, bylaws, constitutions, in order to justify what we do, there’s something wrong with what we’re

doing, because that's not the standard you and I are supposed to use. Oh, those are wonderful guidelines. They can help us. They can be useful. And in our world today, they're even legally required. But if that's what we use to determine our actions, we're missing out on something that's much more important.

So he tells us about this. Now think about it. There is a progression of thought here. First of all, it is shameful that these disputes between brothers exist in the first place. The shamefulness is made worse by taking the matters to court instead of just resolving it between ourselves. And it reaches its most shameful when we take the problems before unbelievers. What a terrible thing that is! That's not the way the Church of God is supposed to be.

[36:46]

A few years ago some of us encountered a situation, and we sought advice from a Church member who was a lawyer. And we'd reached a point where he said, "Alright, if you were in the business world, you've reached a point where all you can do is take people to court." And all of us said, "Well, we're brothers. We can't do that. That's not the right thing to do." And so, he told us, "Okay, then you simply have to accept it. Even though it's not the way things should be, those are your choices: take people to court, or accept it and move forward the best way you can."

By "accept" I don't necessarily mean "condone" or "go along with" in the sense of supportive. But you have to recognize when you've gone as far as you can. And Paul's going to relate that as we go a little further.

**[1 Corinthians 6] verse 7** *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?*

Wow, what a concept that is! That certainly doesn't square with what most people believe in our world around us today. We're going to have to look at that a little bit more. Paul says that: "When you go to court, you have already failed as Christians." When you take your brother to court—now we're not talking about a situation with people who are not believers and who are not willing to be guided and directed by brethren in the Church. When we encounter those situations, then, sometimes, yes, it is appropriate for us to use the appropriate legal abilities that are there in the world around us. But when we're talking about brethren, he says: "It's totally failure if you take your brother to court. It really doesn't matter whether you win or not. It doesn't matter whether you win your point, whether you're proven to be the one in the right or not—you've already failed! You've already harmed your brother. You've already alienated your brother. You've already harmed the Church."

So, it's legal. It's something you can do. You can probably say, "Well, there's no scripture that says I can't do that." But you've failed—you've failed because you harmed your brother, and you've harmed the Church. Even if you win your court case, what have you won? You may have acquired money, possessions. You may have been legally vindicated in the eyes of the law, but you've lost your brother, and you've created division within the Church. You've already suffered utter defeat before you ever begin to address the issues that divided you in the first place. Even if the court decides in your favor, you've been defeated in the court of God's judgment. You've lost more by taking your brother to court than you could ever hope to gain through the courts.

Now what did Paul say here? *Why don't you accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourself be cheated?* Really? As a Christian I have to be willing to let my brother cheat me? I mean, cheating is wrong. There is no question—cheating is wrong. I have to be willing to take that? What does that

mean?

The word means “to deprive of what is one’s due; to take something from someone by means of deception or trickery; to defraud; to deprive by deception.” That sounds pretty serious. Someone might actually try to do that? Well, let’s think of a principle Jesus Christ gave in the sermon on the Mount.

[40:45]

**Matthew chapter 5 verses 40 and 41** *If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. 41 And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.*

What was Jesus Christ saying? Jesus Christ was saying, “Okay, someone feels you’ve done them wrong, and they want to take you to court.” And in the case He uses here in the first place, “They take you to court to demand your tunic. Okay, what you should do is to show them that you never intended to do something wrong with them—give them your cloak too.”

In other words, go above and beyond. If someone thinks you’ve wronged them, then in order to maintain the unity of the body of Christ and the relationship, you should be willing to go above and beyond what’s even **right** in order to show your genuineness in: “I certainly never desired to take anything from you that I shouldn’t.”

The commandment there again, you’ll remember—probably you’ve heard it explained—that a Roman mail carrier had the right to tell anybody, where they were, to carry their mail sack for a mile, that Roman law allowed that, for them to carry it a mile—make you, compel you, to carry it a mile. He says, “Okay, if that’s what the law requires, do more—do more than that. I’ve seen many different situations where the Church has applied this and where individuals have applied it. And when it’s applied, it stops division right in its tracks. It’s hard for an individual to be proud when someone has gone above and beyond what they’ve ever asked to try to make amends. Jesus Christ tells us this is important.

So, Paul now moves here—through this passage he moves to the real core of the issue that’s involved. The central problem is not so much that they used a civil court as it is [that] they had so little regard for one another that they would seek to use the legal system to coerce one another to get their own way. Paul says it’s better to suffer loss, unjustly, than to seek that kind of “justice.” Some things are more important than “justice.”

[43:22]

Plato said: “The good man will always choose to suffer wrong rather than do wrong.” Now Plato wasn’t a very righteous man, but he did capture the sense of what Paul was saying here.

Shouldn’t we be ready, willing, to take a hit in order to preserve the oneness of the Body, in order to preserve the relationship with a brother? Will there be times when a brother in the Church treats us the wrong way? Yeah. Will there be times when maybe a brother—let’s say, for example, they’re going through a very painful and difficult time and you reach out to them, and instead of them recognizing that you’re trying to help, they take it as a criticism, and they perhaps lash back? Okay. Now, you could justly say, “Well, you know, you shouldn’t have talked to me that way. I was only trying to help.” And you would be correct—but, sometimes we need to take a hit.

Sometimes we need to say, “You know what? My friend is going through a tough time. When he gets a chance to think about it, he’s probably going to approach this differently. But instead of being all upset, all offended, I need to take a hit, because my brother matters more to me than my pride. My brother

matters more to me than any physical thing. I should be willing to do that.”

Paul goes on to say: [1 Corinthians 6] **verse 8** *No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat (same word), and you do these things to your brethren!*

He uses them very emphatically. He says: “**You** are doing the wrong. **You** are doing the robbing, because you’re treating your brother in this way. You do wrong. You harm. You hurt. Don’t live that way.”

**Verse 9** *Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?—*

There are several concepts here that are very important, and I don’t want to get distracted from the main message Paul was bringing—the main point that he’s making. This isn’t just some kind of a—something that is off-the-wall, that suddenly Paul is going in a different direction. He’s saying, “Okay, you—if you take your brother before the unbeliever to try to get your way, **instead** of trying to work things through in a godly way, then you become unrighteous. And, don’t you know, the unrighteous are not going to inherit the Kingdom of God?”

[46:11]

Now, there are several things that again are side points that I want to note as we look at this—that the Kingdom of God is inherited. It is something you receive because you are a child of God, because you are a brother or sister of Jesus Christ. The Kingdom of God is your inheritance. And just like any inheritance, you don’t receive it because you earned it. You don’t receive it because you’re such a great person that it belongs to you. It’s yours because your ancestor, your father, your grandfather decided to give it to you. That’s the Kingdom of God. You inherit it.

But one of the other things that I would note here is: that’s the only access to the Kingdom of God. That’s the only way it becomes yours—is by inheritance. If you cut yourself off from your brother, if you separate yourself from your brother for unrighteous reasons, then you cut yourself off from that inheritance. You’re not really a brother anymore. You’re not really one who is living the right way.

Now, this also tells us there are people who will not inherit the Kingdom of God. That’s what we’re going to see as we go further here. So, one of the heresies that sometimes comes up in the Church of God community is what’s called “universal salvation”—the idea that **everyone** will someday be forgiven and become a part of the Kingdom of God, and no one will fail. No, this tells us that there are things that cause people to fail.

Now let’s just quickly go through it without looking in great detail. This is not some random list pulled out of context and used as a list of sinful behaviors. Unrighteousness takes many different forms, and it doesn’t matter which form it takes, it still excludes a person from the Kingdom of God. In listing **these** forms of sin that were clearly going to be excluded from God’s Kingdom, Paul points out that defrauding your brother—even though you may use legal means to do it—is still unrighteousness, and it puts you in the company of the sinners who are going to be excluded from the Kingdom of God.

So, he uses this phrase: —*Do not be deceived.* (Literally: “Stop deceiving yourself.”)

And he begins to list these things: ...*fornicators* (which has to do with any form of sexual immorality), ...*idolaters*, ...*adulterers*, —

Now, remember why idolaters are stuck in the middle of that. Remember in Corinth a great deal of the adultery and fornication was taking place because of the temple prostitutes and the worship of the

pagan gods. So, idolatry and sexual immorality were very, very closely connected in Corinth. So, I think that's one of the reasons why Paul puts that there.

[49:15]

He goes on and talks about: *—nor homosexuals, nor sodomites,*

These are specific terms that refer to both partners in a homosexual relationship. Lesbian activities are covered in **Romans 1 verse 26**, so Paul doesn't go into great detail here.

*Barclay* makes this comment, and I think in our society today we can kind of understand this.

This sin (homosexuality) had swept like a cancer through Greek life, and from Greece, invaded Rome. We can scarcely realize how riddled the ancient world was with it. ...  
Fourteen out of the first fifteen Roman Emperors practiced homosexuality.

Fourteen out of fifteen. It was so common, it was considered just normal.

He goes on to say, [**1 Corinthians 6**] **verse 10**:

*—nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.*

If we are people who have those characteristics—now remember, in each of these characteristics, in each of these situations, we are dealing with individuals who are living a certain way. We're not talking about a person who makes a mistake, stumbles, repents and gets straightened out, who are Christians who stumbled along the way. These people **are** thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and so on.

The term "reviler," I think, is an important word in our world today. It means "those who are abusive to others; abusive people." That's very common today. There are those who, again, in their pride very often, are abusive of others. It shows that the idea of, again, "universal salvation" of course is biblically incorrect. But Paul goes on in talking about this, and he says,

[**1 Corinthians 6:11**] *And such were some of you. 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.*

That's a very powerful statement as well. He says, "Some of you who make up the Corinthian Church today were guilty of being these people. You repented of that."

[51:26]

I think it's important for us to understand—sometimes we can get very negative and judgmental about some sins over others. For many people, homosexuality is almost the epitome of the worst possible form of sexual sin. Well, it is a terrible sin. So is adultery. So is child molesting. So is whatever you want to name that's outside the realm of what God says is proper. God doesn't rank them. And He doesn't have, "Well, this sexual sin is bad, but I'm not so upset by that as I am by this one." No, sexual sin is sexual sin, and it excludes from fellowship with God and God's people.

But he says, "This is what some of you were." Through the years I've had the opportunity on occasion—and I use the word "opportunity" properly—to deal with individuals who had come from the homosexual community. One of my early assignments was in San Francisco back in the late 1970s—early 1970s—and I dealt with several people there who came from that kind of background. I certainly saw some who did not repent of that, and we would have new contacts who wanted to stay in that.

But I also remember some people who very, very genuinely turned from that lifestyle and sought to live God's way of life, and, did so successfully. And we want to help those people. We want to be accepting. We don't go around and say, "Well, you know, old so-and-so used to be a homosexual." No, that's not proper at all.

He says, "*Some of you* were all of these things." God calls all kinds of people to be part of the Church. After all, when the White Throne Judgment begins and all those people are resurrected—or for that matter, even in the Millennium after all the terrible things happen, those who lived through—many of them are going to be very much like this. How do we help them? How do we help those people if none of us ever understood the struggle, what it was like, how difficult it was? God's called people from all kinds of different backgrounds so that we can help people from all kinds of different backgrounds. And we should recognize that. No, we cannot **continue** to live in sin. But we understand that incredible pull that's there.

*So such were some of you.* And he says, instead: "Now, *you were washed*; you were cleansed from the filth of your sin; *you were sanctified*." That is, you're set apart from the rest of mankind by God with the implication you're going to continue to remain set apart. And, you're *justified*, forgiven for the past guilt. It's taken away so you can live the right way.

[54:16]

Why does Paul bring that up? He's reminding them that it is by the authority of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit that **any of us** are able to be a part of the Body of Christ. None of us can come and say that we are here because somehow, we deserved it.

**Verse 12** Here we find again our principle, and it's so very important. And we're going to find it repeated as we go forward. So, keep this principle in mind.

[1 **Corinthians 6:12**] *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.* (I won't let them rule over me.)

This is one of the key verses in this entire epistle: *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.*

What is he telling us here? What are we supposed to learn? There are those who would look at this and say: "Well, see, Paul says I can do anything. There is nothing that restrains me from doing whatever I want." And, many times they would apply this, for example, to what you eat, clean and unclean foods. "Oh, it's lawful for me to eat anything I want to eat." No, that's not what Paul is saying. Is Paul saying it's lawful for me to cheat, steal, kill, commit adultery, worship idols, have other gods? No, of course not. So, what is he saying? He's saying, "All those things which God permits are permitted to me. But not all of them build up. Not all of them are helpful."

Now, let me give a simple example here, and perhaps we can use it to build upon as we go further. Most of us understand that Scripture permits the moderate use of alcohol as a beverage to those who are of legal age. Okay, as long as you use it moderately, appropriately, it's lawful. But what if you're having dinner with someone who used to be an alcoholic and who struggles with that pull. Is it helpful for you to sit there and drink your alcoholic beverage in front of your brother who's having to fight the urge to drink it himself? No, that's not helpful. So, it's lawful for you to do it. But it may not be the best thing to do. Maybe it would be better if I don't at all.

And we're going to see that principle as we get up in the **chapters 8, 9, 10, chapter 11**—we're going to

see that principle. And it's going to continue through this book. But it's a **key** principle. If we're going to have unity, I can't just think about what I am **allowed** to do. I have to think about my brother. I have to think about the impact of what I do.

[57:16]

In the Greco-Roman world there were two basic philosophies, approaches, about the way a person should use his body.

One philosophy was called "asceticism." And basically, asceticism said that everything physical is basically evil, and therefore you should deny your body any pleasure at all. You should seek to be as flat emotionally as possible. Don't get excited in good ways. Don't get down in bad ways. Just maintain evenness. Don't seek any kind of pleasure. Deny yourself any pleasure.

The other philosophy, which was more common in Corinth, was a philosophy, "Epicureanism," which said that you should enjoy anything you have a desire for; that since the body is physical, and God's concerned about spirit, what you do with your body really doesn't matter. It's okay. Go ahead and do whatever you want because, after all, God's only concerned about the heart. I've even heard people sometimes in the Church say, "Well, you know all of these things that are taking place—God is really concerned about the heart." Yes, God's concerned about the heart, but that doesn't mean you can do anything. That's not what Paul is saying here. Paul is obviously not saying he can do anything that crosses his mind. After all, he's just given us two lists of sinful actions that are going to keep a person out of the Kingdom of God. So he's obviously not saying it's okay for me to do those things. But, just because something is technically "not sinful" doesn't mean that a Christian is free to do anything. A Christian has to exercise wisdom, discernment, self-control. The principle is going to permeate the rest of this epistle.

So, as Paul begins to answer this direct question—and this and other questions he's going to answer as we go further—much of what he says is going to hang on this principle: "Even if it's technically legal, does it build up the body of Christ?"

He says: "I can do whatever I choose, **but**, as long as God permits it. But I must not be mastered by it; I must not be owned by these things."

[59:35]

He then says in [1 **Corinthians 6**] **verse 13**: *Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.*

Sounds kind of strange. What's he talking about? Apparently, some were arguing that, "Well, God created these urges that we have. He created hunger, and there's certainly nothing wrong with us satisfying our hunger and being able to eat. He created thirst, and it's okay for us to satisfy our thirst. He created sexual desire, so it must be okay for us to do whatever we want to satisfy our sexual desire."

Paul is saying, "Wait a minute. That's not the way this applies. That's not the proper principle. God is going to *destroy* both the physical and the desires that go with the physical. *The body* is not something that belongs to you. It belongs to God, and He's the one who has the right to determine how it's to be used." Thirst, hunger—those are naturally occurring desires that are necessary to respond to in order to survive. Sexual desire is not necessary to respond to in order to survive. That's a different thing

entirely.

Remember what it says in **Romans 1 verse 28**: *And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;*

If you use human reason alone, which is what Epicureanism and Stoicism and asceticism were—human reason, leaving God out of the picture—if you do that, you’re going to come to some conclusions that are not correct, and the world around them was doing that. But God says we don’t live that way. We don’t set aside the knowledge of God.

In essence, this is the way another [translation] puts it:

**[1 Corinthians 6:13]** *You say, “Food was made for the stomach, and the stomach for food.” This is true, though someday God will do away with both of them. But you can’t say that our bodies were made for sexual immorality. They were made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about our bodies. (That’s the New Living Translation of that.)*

Paul points out that the impact of eating is temporary, but he’s going to show us later in this chapter, sexual immorality has a lasting negative effect. God created the body for His purposes, including the sexual urges. He created that too. But, He also set the parameters within which those urges could be properly exercised. God’s not opposed to the proper use of the body, nor has He left us in the dark about what the proper use is.

He goes on to say: **[1 Corinthians 6] verse 14** *And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power.*

So, in contrast to the stomach and foods which will be destroyed, the body is to be changed and raised at the resurrection. Therefore, what we do with our bodies matters to God.

And then he makes this point: **verse 15** *Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? (And he uses that famous phrase from the Greek: *Mē genoito!*) Certainly not!*

Don’t even think such a thing! He’s saying, “We are all part of the Body of Christ, each one of us. If you try to unite yourself with sexual immorality—Jesus Christ is the Head of the Body; you’re just a part of it—you’re trying to unite Jesus Christ with that immorality. And that’s totally unacceptable!”

**Verse 16** (He says,) *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.”*

Now that’s certainly true, and we can see that in a physical sense. But we also should understand that becoming one flesh in marriage is not just a physical act. It includes a unique and a special intimacy between a husband and wife that they share with one another and no one else. It is that exclusive sharing of the most intimate part of human relationships, the sexuality, which creates a special bond.

*Masters and Johnson* referred to it as “the pleasure bond,” a special bond that exists between **one** man and **one** woman. And apart from that, if we try to take it outside of that relationship, it destroys the power to cement a husband and wife in that unique and special bond that is theirs and theirs alone. So it’s a very special thing.

Well, I would love to go on, but we’ve pretty much used up our time for today. So, we’ll pick up, God willing, in **verse 17** next time. And, we’ll come to understand a little bit more about this and then move



into a fascinating section in **chapter 7** about the marriage relationship.

And, I hope you'll read ahead. As you do, keep in mind the principles we're talking about, and especially this one we've just read—*all things are lawful for me*; not all things build up. Think about that next time.

Thanks for joining us. I look forward to seeing you in class number 9.

[1:05:18]