

Quarter Three: *1 and 2 Corinthians*

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Lesson 4—Sin in the Church

Tuesday: Protecting the Church's Identity

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- **Last Week:** “Unity in Christ”
 - Quarrels in the church & unity in Christ
 - 1 Cor 1 – 4 = appeal against factionalism
- **This week:** “Sin in the Church”
 - 1 Cor 5, 6, through 7:9
 - Sin that crept into the church through influence of surrounding culture
 - Sexual immorality, including incest
 - Lawsuits
 - Prostitution
 - Marriage & singleness

Memory Text: “Do you now know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies” (1 Cor 6:19, 20, NIV).

The week in brief:

- 1. **Sunday:** Dissonance Between Faith and Practice (Ryan)
 - 1 Cor 5:1 – 13 – sin in the church & those in leadership who condone & celebrate that sin; danger of not recognizing sin as sinful
- 2. **Monday:** Dealing with Scandals (Rise)
 - 1 Cor 5:1 – 13 – church discipline for the purpose of repentance, redemption & restoration
- 3. **Tuesday:** Protecting the Church's Identity (Jill)
 - 1 Cor 6:1 – 11 – dealing with matters within the church vs the court system
- 4. **Wednesday:** Antidote Against Sexual Immorality (James)
 - 1 Thess 4:1 – 8; 1 Cor 6:13 – 20 – how to live a life of purity; freedom & deliverance from sexual sin
- 5. **Thursday:** Marriage and Singleness (John D)
 - 1 Cor 6:19 – 7:9 – Biblical view of marriage & sexuality

Tuesday: Protecting the Church's Identity

1 Cor 5:3, 12, 13; 1 Cor 6:1 – 13; Rom 13:1 – 5; Deut 22:22 – 24

- 1 Cor 6:1 – “Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the **unrighteous**, and not before **the saints**?”
 - Unrighteous = secular judges
 - The saints = the members of the church
 - Paul's counsel: don't take believers to court, but settle it internally in the church

- Context matters when studying the Bible
 - Both contextually within the passage as well as comparing one verse with another
 - 1 verse here could be twisted to indicate we “keep it in the church”
 - Ungodly leaders could use that to cover sin, to allow abuse to run rampant or sexual sin
- There is a time and a place for the courts (Rom 13)
 - However, other matters should be kept within the church (1 Cor 6)
 - Question arises:
 - 1. Why should it be kept in the church?
 - Will it keep from airing dirty laundry?
 - Would the church be fairer than the secular authorities?
 - What is the advantage to keeping it in the church?
 - 2. How does one keep the church from judging wrongly or sweeping things under the carpet?
 - The Corinthian church didn’t address the sexual sin in 1 Cor 5 & Paul was appalled at that
 - What checks & balances are there, even in the church?
 - Because the church is composed of imperfect people

6 Principles with disagreements / issues in the church

- **1. Differentiate between matters for the church & matters for the government** (secular courts)
 - Comparison between 1 Cor 6:1 – 11 & Rom 13:1 – 5
 - **Church** (1 Cor 6 affirms)
 - Personal disputes between believers
 - Both parties are believers
 - Issue is relational, ethical or financial – not criminal
 - Examples:
 - Business disagreements between Christians
 - Financial disputes (debts / contracts)
 - Personal offenses (slander / betrayal)
 - Sexual issues (adultery / fornication) (1 Cor 5 – could have been issue between father & son)
 - End result = restoration & healing
 - **Government** (Rom 13 affirms the authority of civil courts for criminal matters)
 - Criminal or public justice issues
 - Violations of civil or criminal law
 - Situations requiring protection, justice or enforcement
 - Examples:
 - Abuse
 - Violence or threats
 - Crimes against society
 - End result = punishment or justice

- **Sin** = matter for the church vs **crime** = matter for the government
 - Not to oversimplify; just a general principle
- **2. Be willing to arbitrate / make hard decisions in the church**
 - 1 Cor 6:5 – “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?”
 - Irony of Corinthians boasting about their wisdom & gifts, yet not one among them with the gift of wisdom & judgment
 - Was the matter the sexual immorality of 1 Cor 5?
 - No decision regarding the adultery taking place in the church?
 - Perhaps the man gave financial gifts to the church or held a high position?
 - *Does fear make us pull back from doing the right thing?
 - 1 Cor 6:2, 3 – “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? (3) Do you not know that we shall judge **angels**? How much more, things that pertain to this life?”
 - Angels – fallen angels
 - Refers to the millennium when the saints will review the record books in heaven
 - Rev 20:4
 - Since God’s followers will be involved in such great matters of eternal destiny, Paul saw no reason why the church thought itself incapable of judging even the least significant cases
 - Step up to the plate: learn to make hard decisions & deal with difficult issues
- **3. Guard the character of God**
 - 1 Cor 6:6 – “But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers!”
 - Paul’s anguish of spirit
 - 2 issues at play:
 - Guard the character of God: don’t air dirty laundry
 - Don’t be the means of someone choosing not to follow God
 - Choose not to be a stumbling block before others
 - Guard the character of God: Christians should administer judgment even more fairly than the secular ones
 - Roman legal system was corrupt & the wealthy always had an advantage
 - Eph 5:3 – “But fornication & all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints”
- **4. Turn the other cheek, if need be**
 - 1 Cor 6:7 – “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?”
 - Matt 5:44 – love your enemy, do good to those who hate you....
 - If it comes down to being wronged vs doing wrong, we should choose to be wronged (Jesus on the cross)
- **5. Walk in holiness**
 - 1 Cor 6:8 “No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren!”

- Corinthian believers weren't just "not arbitrating" or standing up against the wrongs in the church
 - They were doing the wrong themselves
 - Repent: be healed, reconcile
- **6. Trust God, the righteous Judge**
 - 1 Cor 6:9 – "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?.... "
 - List of those who won't inherit the kingdom – indicates God is the ultimate Judge
 - If things aren't done fairly here, God will settle matters

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- 3. Guard the character of God
 - Don't air dirty laundry
 - Administer judgment even more fairly than the secular world
- 4. Turn the other cheek, if need be
- 5. Walk in holiness
- 6. Trust God the righteous Judge