

1 Corinthians 6

Before we look at this evening's passage, look back at chapter 3:4-5

4 For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere men?

5 What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task

1 Corinthians 4:6-21

6 Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, Do not go beyond what is written. Then you will not take pride in one man over against another.

7 For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

It seems that perhaps it was not only the Apostles but others in the church had also come to be idolized as leaders, but he chooses not to 'name and shame' them. It is possible that there were Jewish converts who were well taught in the Scriptures (Old Testament) and they could teach how Jesus fits with them. But they now appear to be putting themselves above the Apostles.

Again Paul returns to his theme and points out that they are only servants, and any gifts or abilities they might have, were only theirs because they had been given to them by God. They had been entrusted to his servants (3:5) in order that they could be better able to carry out the master's will.

Now imagine we wished to meet a king. We would go to the palace and sooner or later we would be met by one of his servants who would say 'follow me and I'll show you to the King'. In this case it's appropriate to follow, but only until you had met the king for yourself. Then you no longer follow the servant – you follow the king.

Here the problem was that the new leaders had begun to experience power and prestige and were unwilling to give it up. Also, it seems that their teachings were being given precedence over recorded scripture (3:6). Now look at verse 8:

8 Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have become kings— and that without us! How I wish that you really had become kings so that we might be kings with you!

The word translated "have all you want" occurs only here, and in Acts 27:38, where the meaning is: "When they had eaten as much as they wanted." It is usually applied to a feast, and speaks of those who can't eat any more. So here it means, "You think you have enough. You are satisfied with your conviction of your own knowledge, and do not feel your need of anything more."

You have become rich - This is the same idea in a different form. "You think you are so rich in spiritual gifts, that you don't need any more."

And finally we have the idea of people who are raised to a throne, the highest elevation, where there was nothing further to be reached or desired. They had arrived.

What is the best way to make sure we never have the same thoughts?

How about looking at the words of Jesus?

Luke 17:7-10 *"Suppose one of you had a servant ploughing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? Would he not rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'? Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'"*

For the true Apostles, life actually seems harder than that:

9 For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men.

Paul pictures a triumphal parade on the way to the arena, with the Royal party at the front, and those captured in battle paraded as trophies at the rear to demonstrate the king's supremacy over them.

Like those condemned to die . . . made a spectacle

Once a prisoner had been taken to the arena, if they managed to fight well enough to survive, they were simply kept there to fight again another day. Their only fate was to be made a spectacle, and then to die.

Do you think that the Apostles accepted that this was where their calling would lead them?

Not all Christians have to suffer in this way, but it was always recognised that the 'Standard-bearer' in battle was the person who would attract the most fire. So Paul compares these new successful leaders at Corinth with the sufferings of the original Apostle church-planters:

10 We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honoured, we are dishonoured!

11 To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless.

12 We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it;

13 when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world.

14 I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, as my dear children.

What is Paul's warning?

That those with popularity now should watch out that they don't get treated the same?

Or that the true prophets of God have always been treated like this – so what does it say about these new leaders?

Now Paul explains why he is writing, not as a senior Church Officer to point out the error of their ways, but rather as their father to show them a better way.

15 Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.

Look at the word 'Guardians': instructors – those who consider themselves able to teach – but can never take the place of a father. And 'ten thousand' might suggest they had more teachers than was good for them! The Apostles were naturally concerned for the churches they had planted, and Paul in particular quite rightly believed that like a father, he had a responsibility to keep this church from moving away from the truth.

16 Therefore I urge you to imitate me.

Can someone explain? (As I imitate Christ, so you should imitate what I do)

17 For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

Acts 19:22, 1 Corinthians 16:10 – it was Paul's intention that Timothy would reach them, but he wasn't totally sure he would make it.

18 Some of you have become arrogant, as if I were not coming to you.

19 But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord is willing, and then I will find out not only how these arrogant people are talking, but what power they have.

20 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.

Have you heard it said: 'I can't hear what you're saying – what you do is shouting so loudly'? For those in the Kingdom of God, the power of the Holy Spirit present in a Christian's life should speak much louder than the words coming from their mouth.

21 What do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a whip, or in love and with a gentle spirit?

Paul has a problem – he must exercise discipline in order to help the church at Corinth back onto the right path, but his love for them doesn't want to alienate them completely. He has other problems on his mind which he finds difficult (and which we would too) – and we are going to look at these in our next study. This will involve Judging, so for now we will start to consider the subject of

judging – and there are some verses we skipped over which we will look at in a minute.

When we Judge we either make a judgement or we pass judgement or both.
(Write on board 'Make a judgement' 'Pass judgement')

What do we understand by these terms?

1 Making a judgement

To come to a decision about something, usually whether it is right or wrong, or good or bad.

2 Passing judgement

To carry out an action as a result of our judgement

I look at oranges in the fruit bowl. I see that one has a round patch that has gone dark green and started to grow mould. I make a judgement – it's bad. I now pass judgement – and put it in the compost.

While we are by the fruit bowl, we should also clear up the difference between judging between good and evil, and having personal preferences. In the bowl are some apples, Coxes and Golden Delicious. I prefer one to the other but they are both perfectly good apples. We saw in an earlier study the problems that can arise when we attempt to persuade others that our preferences are better than theirs.

The Bible has many passages about avoiding evil, fleeing from temptation, choosing what is good (e.g. 1 Thessalonians 5:21, 22). In order to do that we have to make judgements: we have to be able to decide what things are right and what are wrong.

We make and pass judgement every day. But what about judging others? Didn't Jesus say we must not judge others? Let's look:

Matthew 7

1 Do not judge, or you too will be judged.

2 For in the same way as you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

3 Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?

4 How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?

5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

What was the speck of sawdust another word for?

Sin

Why did Jesus use the idea of a speck of sawdust in someone else's eye for his illustration?

(Have pre-written on board)

Because it causes problems

The person with it may not be aware of it
 It shouldn't be there
 The person with it would be happier without it
 The person with it can often do nothing himself to remove it

Verse 5 does not say we shouldn't try to help others who have a problem, rather it warns against a hypocritical attitude when we make judgements about others.

We must also be very careful if 'making judgements' then have to lead to 'passing judgement'.

Let's look at the passage we skipped earlier:
 Chapter 4:3-5:

3 I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself.

4 My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.

5 Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.

In these verses and in Luke chapter 6, we are told not to judge, and to love our enemies.

So when is it right to judge and take action against another person?

We are never given the right or the responsibility of eternally judging anyone. We cannot correctly weigh action, motives, opportunities, nor know all things about any individual: God alone is capable of doing that.

Paul recognised serious error in the church, and serious error in individuals. He had to take action, and that involved making, and passing judgements.