

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

Date: 13 June 2021
Services: Across the diocese
Series: **God's church** - 1 Corinthians
Title: **Godly members**
Passage: 1 Corinthians 5-6
Outline: **Will take a stand:**
1. On sexual perversion
2. On settling disputes
3. On leaving wrongdoing
4. On sexual immorality

The Corinthian church had a lot going for it...

Back in Ch 1 Paul thanks God for this church – because of the **grace** God has given it... because of the **spiritual gifts** seen among the people – because it was **alive** – **in many ways it was flourishing.** //

But it doesn't take long until we see that while Paul sees and records all that was **good**, there **were** in fact, many underlying **challenges**...some of which we've already seen...

There were divisions around **leadership** and **quarrelling** about which leader was **better**... /

We will see when we come **back** to the series in term 3 – issues around **spiritual gifts** by which people puffing themselves up with pride because they thought **they** had better gifts than **others** //

But here in chapters 5 and 6 – we'll be confronted with some **other** issues – in fact – very **disturbing issues**... //

Last week in ch 4, Paul addressed the **LEADERS**... and we saw that Paul put to the Corinthians, that **godly** leaders are only **servants**... - why then elevate one above another?

...we saw that godly leaders take up their **cross** and **follow Christ** in the way of **suffering**... why then get behind leaders claiming some sort of triumphalist approach?

...and that **godly leaders** lead by **example** – not just clever **talk**... //

Here now in chapters **5 and 6** / he turns to addressing the issue of godly **MEMBERS**... please have 1 Cor 5 and 6 open in front you.

But before I show you where we are headed this morning – I want to remind you of one **other** important **contextual issue**...

...and that is – the nature of **Corinth itself**

It was a modern **large Greek** city - a **bustling, cosmopolitan** city... huge trading centre..

... located on the narrow isthmus connecting southern **Greece** to the **mainland**...

Above the city - on the hill... was the temple of **Aphrodité** - an ancient Greek **goddess** associated with **love, beauty, pleasure, passion** and **procreation**.

And associated with that temple, were temple **prostitutes**... said to be a **1,000** of **them**.

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The city had a reputation of being a **licentious** city... in fact **one** of the Greek verbs for 'to **fornicate**' was *Korinthiazomai*...

in such a context it was **challenging** to be the **distinctive** people of God... or even to **work** out what that **meant**...

So Paul is very **blunt** with the **Corinthian Christians**. //

And I need to say that some of what **the Lord** raises here in His **Word** to us and therefore some of what I raise may be **confronting** for **you** today... for a **range** of **reasons**...

But this is what happens when you preach right through a book of the Bible – you don't get to **gloss** over the bits you don't like... and we must **engage** with the text and listen **carefully** to what God wants to **say** to **us** from his word... //

And because of the nature of the material – I also want to signal that it may take just a little longer for me to unpack this than my usual **15-17 minutes**... //

So here's where we are headed today...

Godly members - will take a stand:

- 1. On sexual perversion**
- 2. On settling disputes**
- 3. On leaving wrongdoing behind; and**
- 4. On sexual immorality**

First then: godly leaders will take a stand:

1. ON SEXUAL PERVERSION – CH 5

Have a look with me at vv1 and 2 - *It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a **kind** that even pagans do not tolerate: A man is sleeping with his father's wife. ²And you are **proud!** Shouldn't you rather have gone into **mourning** and have put **out** of your **fellowship** the man who has been doing **this**?*

So let's get this straight... a man who is a member of the church is sleeping with his father's wife.... that is, not his **mother**, but his **step** mother... and it was clear from the Old Testament, that such relationships were considered **incest** and **completely inappropriate**. /

And this obviously wasn't happening on the **quiet** - only being talked about behind **closed doors**... it was **public** – it was **accepted** and indeed the church was **proud of it**.

We don't know the **basis** on which they were proud, but presumably – in this sex-crazed city – something along the lines of the church being **progressive** – **inclusive** – and right up to **date!** //

Even **more** disturbing? // was that **pagans** do not even tolerate this!

So **all sorts** of perverse sexual practices went on in Corinth... but even the **pagans** drew the line **somewhere** – // and that **somewhere** included sleeping with your father's **wife!**

But in the **church** – not a **problem!** //

And the word of God says that instead of the church being **proud**, they ought to have been **grieving!** // It

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ought to have **shattered** their **hearts** – like when you lose a loved one!

And then God makes it clear that **godly** leaders **will take a stand** on sexual **perversion** of this **nature**.

What is the stand they are to take?

V2 – they will put **out** of their **fellowship** the man who has been **doing** this...

V9 – they will not **associate** with such **people**...!

Have a look at v11 - *I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who **claims** to be a brother or sister but is **sexually immoral** or **greedy**, an **idolater** or **slanderer**, a **drunkard** or **swindler**. **Do not even EAT with such people.** //*

Now he doesn't mean the people down the **street** or who live over the road at your work **place** or at the **pub** who are **sexually immoral** or **greedy** or an **idolater** or **slanderer** or are a **drunkards** or **swindlers**... otherwise – he says in v10 - we would have to **leave** the **world** – go off and live isolated in a some sort of **monastery**... // and we **would** wouldn't we?? //

NO – he's not talking about **outside** the church – but anyone who **CLAIMS** to be a brother or sister... **INSIDE** THE CHURCH – who **claims** to be Christian - but then is clearly **pursuing** a **lifestyle** that **is the opposite!**... //

'don't have anything to **do** with them' he **says**.

That sounds harsh doesn't it?

Yes – but **important** for two reasons – (1) that they might not influence you in their **ungodly** way of **life**

And (2) that you might **demonstrate** to them that if they still **claim** to be Christian, such **actions** are **unacceptable**.

And the point of that is... not just to **make** a point – but to **wake them up** and win them **back!**v5 – that they may be **saved** on the **day** of the **Lord** – that's the **end goal**... But there will be **pain** along the way. //

We don't tend to **do** church discipline well **today** – in fact – it's not that we don't do it well – we just don't **do** it! //

But we **should!**

Both for the **protection of the church**; and so that the one who **claims** to be a brother or sister might be put **out** // to be won **back**. // Put **out** – to be won **back**.

Ok – so godly members will take a stand on **sexual perversion** ///

and **second**... // Godly members will take a stand on:

2. SETTING DISPUTES CH 6 VV 1-8

Now – I'm not going to spend a lot of time on this... (a) because the text is pretty straight forward and (b) because what **remains** to unpack here needs a little more time to unpack.

but suffice to say this: Christians ought not to take their disputes with **other Christians** to the **secular courts**

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Here are the reasons Paul gives:

1. Christians will one day judge the world (I don't have time to unpack THAT thought! – I'll have to deal with that another time)... but if Christians are going to judge the **world** – shouldn't we be able to judge our **own matters**?
2. If you take it to the **secular** courts... you're taking a matter between believers and asking someone who is **ungodly** to settle the matter... someone whose way of life is **scorned** in the church... how can **that** be a good idea?
3. It's not a good look before **unbelievers** that Christians can't settle disputes between **themselves**
4. Taking matters to the secular courts is an indication of **personal failure**... Paul says it would be better to be **wronged** or **cheated**... than to take matters to the **secular court**
5. It's a sure sign that someone is doing the **wrong thing**... someone is **cheating** or doing **wrong**... otherwise there would be no **dispute** in the first **place**!! //

Five **excellent** reasons

Can I ask – are you in dispute with **another** Christian at the moment?

I'm sure it's **hard** and **complicated**... and I don't want to **trivialise** the pain this is causing you – but is it not a sure sign one or **both** of you are doing the **wrong thing**? Pause now and search your heart and see if there is a **better** way than taking a Christian brother or sister to the **court** and see how you might settle the dispute and come to reconciliation. //

But this whole matter then leads into **another** really **significant** issue... /

Namely – that people who are **pursuing** a life which **characterised** by **wrongdoing** (the older NIV had 'wickedness'), have missed the memo that to be **Christian** is to **radically LEAVE wrongdoing** (wickedness) **behind** and adapt a **lifestyle** which matches the new **life** a Christian has been **given**.

So our third point...

...Godly members will take a stand on:

3. LEAVING WRONG DOING BEHIND – CH 6 VV 9-11

v9 **wrongdoers** will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

The 'Kingdom of God'? – not a **geographical** area – but a kingdom of **people** who **bow** to **Jesus** as their **King**! Who no longer serve **themselves** or the **evil one**... but have turned their lives **around** so that **Jesus** is **King**

And the kingdom of **God** – almost by **definition** – cannot be full of **wrongdoers**!

God's character is **perfect** // his standards are **high**

Those who do not **embrace** that **cannot be** in his **kingdom**.

If you want to pursue a life of **habitual wrongdoing** and do not **want** to submit to Jesus as **King** – then – don't be under any **illusions** – you are **excluded** from God's **kingdom**! //

And just so we know what he's talking about he gives some examples – v9b *Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers.... nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor*

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swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God...

It's basically the same list Paul gave in the previous chapter of those who **CLAIM** to be Christian but are living as if they are **NOT** /// those people from whom godly members are to **distance themselves...** //

And so long as they **pursue** such a **lifestyle**, they won't **inherit** the **Kingdom of God**. The **gift of eternal life** will **not** be given to **them**. //

(Irony – **excluded** from the **kingdom of God** but were being welcomed in the **church!**)

And you might think – hang on Mark – I was **greedy** this past week – are you saying I'm **out**? //

No because he's not talking about **isolated acts...** rather a **whole-of-life-stance** which says loud and clear on 'greed is what characterises me...' or 'stealing...' or 'getting **drunk**' - that's the **orientation** of my life... without **God**'.

The sexually **immoral** – well - watch **TV or the movies** – and such a lifestyle is **held up** in **society** – **portrayed** as **desirable...** as the **mainstream** of **life**.

Those who are **idolaters** – violate the 1st and 2nd commandments... they cease to worship the **Creator** but are worshipping something from the **creation!**

Those who are **greedy** – they are **exalted** in our capitalistic culture...

Uncontrolled **drinking** – that's just **celebrated** and **laughed at** – up to that point where lives are **destroyed** by a road accident and **relationships trashed as a result**.

God says – 'do not be **deceived**' - // **these** people – so long as they **continue** without **repentance** - will **not** inherit the **kingdom** ///

but we **have** been **deceived!** // We don't take **God** seriously. We don't take his **judgement seriously!** /// We think 'ah – everyone will be ok in the end'. But that's not the case.

But you will note – I left one sin out of the list when I took you through it...

From v9 neither the sexually immoral or idolaters nor adulterers, nor men who have sex with men... ..will inherit the kingdom of God.

I left it out **initially**, because I did not want it to distract us from feeling the **weight** of all the **other** sins **mentioned** there which are so significant.

AND because I wanted you to see that this item 'men who have sex with men' is not singled **out** by the Apostle Paul as **different** to all the **other** things he lists... ///

but although he does not single it **out**, we **DO** need to take note that it **is** in there in the **list** – as something which unless you've turned **away** from – will **exclude** you from the kingdom of **God**.

Now that may come as a **shock**.

But let me say this – being **attracted** to someone of the same sex / is not **sin**.

And there are many Christians who have turned to Jesus in **repentance** and **trust** who live with that attraction every day... but **never act on it...** /

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...in the **same** way as a married Christian person might feel **attraction** to some who is not their **spouse**, but never act on it... //

Attraction is not the **issue** //

Identifying as same sex **attracted** is not the issue... like identifying as an **alcoholic** - who never **drinks** - is **not** the **issue**...

But a lifestyle where homosexual **activity** is the accepted **norm** (whether male or female), and not seen as anything from which one needs to **repent** - **there's** the **issue**.

And while some scholars say 'well Paul simply didn't know about homosexual love like we know it...' ...that the Bible is naïve and we now know better so we need to update the Bible... friends - that is simply not true... as right there in Corinth – men had men (and tragically boys) as **lovers** and wives for **procreation**... and they also were very familiar with **transgender issues**... / This was Corinth!

But we need to be clear here...

...those in this list – it's not because of their **greed** as such or their **idolatry** as such or their **adultery** as such or their **homo-sexual activity** as such which will mean they will **not** inherit the kingdom of God... it will be because of their **rejection** of Jesus as the **king!** - their **failure** to **repent** and **believe** the **good news**. //

...because did you **hear v11??** //

We read one of the great sentences in the NT – **that is what some of you / WERE!!** //

He's just given us this **sobering list**... and then with a shout of **joy** he speaks of the **transforming power of Jesus**... **that is what some of you / WERE!**

...but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of God...

friends – that - is the power of **Christianity!!** – it can take men and women lost in **shame** and far **away** from **God** – and make them then **sons** and **daughters** of **God!**... //

And there no one who is **outside** the possibility of God's **transforming grace**...!

God says – I want you to repent and believe the gospel and **then** I want you to receive my Holy Spirit and then revel in the new life you've been given / and leave aside your old life.

God says - **don't fall** into the trap of living like your old **friends** – you weren't saved **FOR** that / you were saved **FROM** that!

All wrongdoing of that kind is something **godly members** will decisively leave **behind**... ///

...so //// godly members will take a stand on **sexual perversion**; will take a stand on **settling disputes**, they will take a stand on **leaving wrongdoing behind**, and **finally** they will take a stand on **sexual immorality**

4. SEXUAL IMMORALITY – CH 6 VV 12-20

Very briefly now...

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The word translated 'sexual immorality' is *pornea* and it refers to **any sexual activity outside** of the **marriage** between a **man** and a **woman**. //

And although the word of God here has listed sexual **immorality** along side other public sins such as **greed** and **swindling**... showing us that sexual sin is just on a **par** with other sins... // in this final section he **DOES single this sin out**

Why is that?

Why does it get **special treatment**?

Because (v19) your **body** is the temple of the Holy **Spirit** who is in **you**...

He is **in** us. We are in **him**. No **separation**.... /

And our body is for the **Lord**, and the **Lord** for the **body** – v13

Everywhere we go, **Christ** goes!

We are totally **interwoven** with Christ as temples of the Holy Spirit.

And therefore to use your body for sexual immorality – remember – any **sexual activity outside** of **marriage** – is to use part of Christ's **own** body and include Him in it!

When you and I engage in **immorality**, we engage **Christ** in it!

When we became a Christian, we didn't just make a **decision**; we didn't just go out the **front**; we didn't just become **religious**; we didn't just determine to have **purpose**; we didn't just turn over a new leaf... we were absolutely radically and wonderfully **changed** for all **eternity**!

... so Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5 – you are a new creation!

And we were then inhabited by Christ himself – by His Spirit...

Therefore he says – do you think we should then take our bodies and unite them in this way with **prostitutes** or someone who is not our **spouse**?

NO!! //

Why is this **different**? V18 - *All other sins a person commits are **outside** the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins **against their own body**.*

Because something happens in **here** – **sexual** sins impact the human **psyche** like no other... it plays with your **head**... like no other **sin**...

Sexual immorality is **dressed up** and **paraded** in front of us everyday and is painted as the **panacea** of many **ills**; the **answer** to **emptiness**, and the **nirvana** of our **existence**...

But the devil knows that this kind of sin will **destroy our lives**... in ways **other** sins like **greed** and **theft** will not!

English post Roger McGough writes about when the act of love is divorced in fact from love

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*The Act of love lies somewhere
Between the belly and the mind
I lost the love some time ago
Now I've only the act to grind.*

*High on bedroom darkness
As we endure the pantomime
Ships that go bang in the night
Run aground on the sands of time*

Friends, sex outside of **marriage** = **intimacy** without **intention and communion** without **commitment.** //

godly **members** in **churches** take a stand on **sexual immorality.**

How? How do they do that?

Very clear in v18 : they must **FLEE** – v18 – they must **RUN from it!!** //

do whatever it takes to **avoid** it... //

And if you're stuck in sexual immorality even as you watch this today... then **flee**... make it your habit to **run**... **flee** to **Christ**... flee to his **cross**... find **forgiveness**... and **walk again** in the **new life of Christ.** ////

Let's close... this has not been easy – and it's taken a little longer than usual... but it is **SO important**...

And I want to say – I've not been able to canvass all the issues. What I've wanted to do today is deal with the Word of God as it treats these issues as they arise.

There are many other issues I may have addressed and I may do so at some other time in another context.

If you have questions – please don't hesitate to contact me.

Most have my email – bishop@bathurstanglican.com.au

Don't hesitate to contact me – or call the office and I'll make a time to speak with you.

This may raise all sorts of other questions and I want to be able to help us think it through. But I've wanted to handle the Word of God in context today and in relation to everything else around these issues.

So let me recap:

Godly members will take a **stand**...

1. On sexual **perversion**
2. On settling **disputes**
3. On leaving **wrongdoing behind**
4. On sexual **immorality**

In the sex-crazed and generally licentious city of **Corinth**, the Christians needed to stand **out** in all this... not blend in... // and live the life of the **new creation** to which they were **called**...

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And in sex-crazed nation of Australia – in our drinking culture... in a culture where **slander** is the **norm**; where adultery is the **norm**, people who rip others off or **scam** them are **common**... where homosexual activity is **celebrated**... – **Christians** need to take a **stand**... they need to stand out not to blend in... and live the **radically different, beautiful new life**... of those who have **received Jesus Christ** // of those who have become **God's children**... /// of those who are **inhabited** by His **Holy Spirit** // of those who by God's **grace** have been brought into the **Kingdom of God**.