

## Series on First Corinthians

By Doug Hamilton

### 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 “The Big Understanding”

Two lessons ago it was discussed of the seriousness of fornication in the lives of the Corinthian church. The Greeks were a people that had a serious history of sexual immorality and it had seeped into the church to the point of one of their prominent members had been tolerated to be in a step son/step mother sexual relationship. This was something that was not even acceptable among the Roman culture much less the church. They had become compliant in the works of the devil and something had to be done. That something was a personal disfellowshipping by Paul in the hopes that the congregation would follow his inspired example. After a brief side

discussion about the litigious attitude of the church members toward each other, Paul is back on the subject of this most-crippling sin among the human race, SEXUAL IMMORALITY.



### Old and New Corinth had quite a history with immorality.

- The Greek author, Aristophanes (approx. 450-385 BC) coined a new Greek verb - *to Corinthianize* - meaning participation in immoral sexual practices. The archaeological evidence suggests thriving homosexual practices also.
- A later historian (Strabo who wrote about 7 B.C.) spoke of a thousand temple prostitutes plying their trade in Corinth during its peak of prosperity. He quoted an old proverb that sarcastically suggested, "Not every man is man enough to go to Corinth."
- By Paul's day, many sailors on shore leave also visited the city. These factors contributed to the excessive sexual immorality that characterized Corinth, as did the temple of Aphrodite (or Venus), one of the twelve heathen temples in Corinth. Aphrodite was the pagan goddess of love. By Paul's day, Greek plays commonly portrayed a citizen of Corinth as either a drunk or a prostitute. It is interesting to note that the heathen idolatry and gross sexuality immorality that Paul described in Romans 1:18-27 he wrote while in Corinth, which was known for its twelve heathen temples and sexual immorality.
- In fact many Greeks frowned upon the body as a major hindrance to their sexual tendencies.
  - Plato essentially taught that the body is the enemy of the soul.
  - Plutarch referred to the body as a source of evil and pollution to the mind.
  - Philo often spoke negatively concerning the body as a "foul prison-house of the soul" and that it was like a "sack-cloth, tomb and a grave".
  - They had a common proverb that said "The body is a tomb."
  - Their famous Stoic philosopher Epictetus poetically phrased "I am a poor soul shackled to a corpse."
- As a result many of the Greeks reasoned that it was okay to participate in immorality for it was a separate issue from the soul. Think religious thoughts while living like a heathen takes care of both this life and the afterlife of the soul and body respectively. Their motto was to "Eat and Drink, for tomorrow we die (15:32). They could have the best of both worlds, the spiritual and the physical.

With what was covered two lessons ago as well as this, let us continue our discussion of the big sin of immorality with a Big Understanding, which is the title of this lesson. We must have a BIG UNDERSTANDING of SEXUAL IMMORALITY if ever expect to serve God in the way we must to enter the kingdom of heaven.

## Series on First Corinthians

By Doug Hamilton

1 Corinthians 6:12 All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.

- The statement “all things are lawful for me” appears to come from a saying among the Greek culture that proclaimed they were the freest people of the earth. They prided the supposed “fact” that they were so mentally developed that anything freedom they wished was justified. They appeared to have strongly promoted the excuse for their indulgences through this slogan (1 Cor. 10:23). A few of the other versions actually do better job catching their slogan with the following:
  - NIV: “Everything is permissible for me”
  - NLT: “I am allowed to do anything”
  - God’s Word: “I am allowed to do anything”
- They were a people that really loved to exercise their “rights” to live anyway they wanted, but this attitude could not be permitted in the church, especially with their immoralities. Paul was saying that in their celebrated “freedoms” they had actually been enslaved to the same old “master” of sin. As Paul once told the Galatians in 5:1 *It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.*

1 Corinthians 6:13-14 Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. <sup>14</sup> Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power.

- Paul was using one of their “justification” mind games to their fleshly indulgences. The Corinthians would reason since God designed the stomach for food and vice-versa that anything we shoveled into the gut was just fine, for God made them both. He completely takes this logic off the table by confirming that at sometime in the future the stomach/food relationship will be terminated. That process ends when this life is over, for hunger pangs and food in the grave become non-factors.
- What remains then will not be the futile logic of the body and immoral actions, for God saved them through Christ from their immoralities when they came up out of the water of baptism. They had been washed, sanctified and justified by the authority of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit (6:11). They were not to go on living in the same immorality that they were just delivered from. They said that they would love God with all the heart, soul and mind (Mt 22:37) because Jesus gave His body for theirs, but now their burning passions of the crotch were calling them from the same Lord Whom died for them.
- **WAKE UP CALL! WE IN THE CHURCH ARE NOT PERMITTED TO LIVE IN ANY WAY WE WANT TO AND STILL EXPECT TO BE IN HEAVEN FOLLOWING THE GREAT DAY OF JUDGMENT!**
- *1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. We are freed from sin to a new Master, not to serve the old master, but to walk in the newness of life.*

## Series on First Corinthians

By Doug Hamilton

1 Corinthians 6:15-17 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! <sup>16</sup> Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body *with her*? For He says, "THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH." <sup>17</sup> But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit *with Him*.

- Paul now takes a common example from the lives of many Corinthian church members that were called out of the world and into the kingdom of Christ, sleeping with temple prostitutes. Some of their Gnostic beliefs combined with legalized temple prostitution of Corinth lead many to carry on the sexual immorality of the brothels.
- Paul takes the beautiful analogy of us being a temple of God (1 Cor 3:16, 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16) and contrasts it with a immoral worldly temple of the flesh. He uses the quote from the first marriage in *Genesis 2:24 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh*. This beautiful passage is the same one that...
  - Moses used to describe the family relationship, the life-long relationship and the functional relationship that is carried out to the human race.
  - Jesus used to describe the supreme unity that is to exist from the beginning (Mt 19:5).
  - Paul used to describe our church/Savior relationship of respect, submission, sacrifice and loving relationship (Eph 5:31).
- All these principles necessary to the soul are out the window as the Christian engages in sexual immorality. He has become one with the one that severs us from the One True One, Jesus Christ. It cuts at the heart, soul and mind of the person engaged in such behavior, enslaving him once again to the very thing with which he was delivered from.

1 Corinthians 6:18 Flee immorality. Every *other* sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.

- We are told to FLEE immorality. This means to run for your life! All other sins that a person commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. How is this different from all other sins that we can have? Sexuality touches every aspect of the human being at the deepest level.
  - Physiological Needs: Our sexuality is deeply part of who we are. Our endocrine system, our gender, brain structure and physical differences all are wired into who we are. We naturally crave that certain something just as God designed. There must be something pursued once our physiology calls for it.
  - Psychological Needs: Our thought processes, from the time that we are young, through puberty, young adulthood and into full adulthood, have been contemplated. From the mere curiosities to the perceived expectations, they all beckon for us to act in some way.
  - Emotional Needs: One of the first questions that I will ask a couple when they are seeking counsel is how is the love life? God designed us with the need to be loved and accepted on all levels. There are many hundreds of ways that a husband and wife can carry out the emotional need of acceptance, but communal act of intimacy communicates full acceptance of the other person. When there is

## Series on First Corinthians

By Doug Hamilton

immorality competing within, then there are mixed messages sent. Anything less than full acceptance robs leaves that need unmet and not what God intended.

- Biological Needs: Most people desire to have offspring to share their lives with. Children truly are a gift from the Lord and it is no accident that they are the natural result of God's design. This need is deep, often demonstrated in young girls from the time they are playing with dolls and in the boys as they develop later in their roles. When reproduction is carried outside of the bonds of marriage, the action never lives up to the commitment, for it is simply an action.
- Spiritual Needs: Paul writes in *1 Corinthians 10:31* "*Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*"
  - How do we eat and drink for the glory of God? We pray with thanks before the meal we eat and drink. We consume the food without a spirit of gluttony. We show appreciation for those who the Lord used to provide the meal.
  - How do we have sexual relations according to the glory of God? As spelled out in the next chapter it is in the bonds of marriage between one man and one woman. Anything beyond that is immorality.
- When we participate in immorality, we corrupt every fiber of our being, physiologically, emotionally, biologically and spiritually. In this way the "immoral man" sins against his own body different from the other sins.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? <sup>20</sup> For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

- "Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit (6:19). In the pagan urban landscape of the Roman colony, the temples on their high podia were the places where the gods—in the form of their cult-statues—were thought to dwell. In contrast, the bodies of Christians are the temple of the Holy Spirit." - Arnold, C. E. (2002). *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary Volume 3: Romans to Philemon*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- We are the temple of the Holy Spirit and the True God dwells in us. We must live in a way that reflects that in every way. Do not be like the Greeks who thought they could do one thing with their body, think another way with their mind and still make it to heaven. Walking with Jesus means that we do not tolerate fornication or any other sin in our lives and still expect the soul to be right with God. THAT IS THE BIG UNDERSTANDING.

## Series on First Corinthians

By Doug Hamilton

### 1 Corinthians 7: The Big Fix

Paul identifies the reason for him writing this section of scripture to the *Corinthians in 7:35 This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is appropriate and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.* What he is about to say was not written as a means to restrain the Corinthian Christians, but to promote undistracted devotion to the Lord among the members of the Christian community. This is important to remember as we work through this text.

1 Corinthians 7:1–2 Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. <sup>2</sup> But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband.

- The Greeks reasoned that the body and soul were separate, which to some degree they are. They also reasoned that the body and soul functioned independently from each other. This led to two major problems concerning sexual sin in the church. Both of them were based in early agnosticism
  1. The first problem was with immorality. It was rampant in the Corinthian church. This is because one of the agnostic views was that a person could do what they want with their bodies since it was separate from the body. We must remember that Paul was writing to a culture that in large part felt the body was a prison for the soul.
    - 1 Corinthians 15:32 LET US EAT AND DRINK, FOR TOMORROW WE DIE.
  2. On the other side of the spectrum was asceticism. They also hated the body over the soul. As a response, they sought to starve the body of any earthly pleasure, believing it would purify them. The ascetic would go to the extremes by limiting specific foods, indulgences and even sex relations over all.
    - 1 Timothy 4:3 “men who forbid marriage *and advocate* abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.”
    - Colossians 2:23 These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, *but are* of no value against fleshly indulgence.
- It is in this second category that Paul would address a problem. They had used the fact that their apostle Paul was a celibate (1 Cor 9:5) and combined it with their Greek-based emotions against the flesh. They were teaching that it was best to not marry at all in an effort to avoid worldly lusts.
- It was good for them to decide to suppress their earthly lusts, but because it often led into fornication. For this reason the church members were to seek the only option permitted as an acceptable solution by God...MARRIAGE.
- God said in Genesis 2:18 “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.” God designed us, including the physiology of sexuality. It was all declared good by the same God. It is in the bonds of marriage that ONE man and ONE woman that sexuality finds sanctity from God. It is true on two levels:
  1. It is to be a reciprocal. Verses 3-4 The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. <sup>4</sup> The wife does not have authority over