Temples of the Holy Spirit

1Corinthians 6:1-20

Key Verse: 6:19 “Do you not 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;”

In chapter 5 Paul urged the believers in Corinth Church to get rid of the old yeast which corrupts their hearts and destroys the unity of the church. Through his teaching we must also get rid of our old sinful life and gain the desire to walk by the Holy Spirit and live a victorious life. In chapter 6 Paul brings up another issue, which were lawsuits among the believers. He concludes this chapter with the warning against sexual immorality.

First, do you not know? (1-6) The main cause of the division in the church was the difference of preference. In the beginning God created all creatures in different kinds, different characters, and different roles. We human beings are all different in many ways, even between twins who were born at the same time from the same mother. When we admit this ‘difference’ and respect others’ uniqueness, we avoid conflict among the believers in the church. However, in Corinth Church there were lawsuits among the believers. They brought their spiritual problem to the court of judgment. It was disgraceful to the Lord and to the ungodly people. How did Paul deal with this? Look at verses 1-6. “***If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord’s people? Or do you not know that the Lord’s people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, do you ask for a ruling from those whose way of life is scorned in the church? I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? But instead, one brother takes another to court—and this in front of unbelievers***!” Paul’s message contains two things: 1. We Christians have spiritual authority to judge the world. 2. Solve trivial cases in the church, not bring them to the court. Christians are people with the Spirit and unbelieving judges are people without the Spirit. The people with the Spirit are superior to the people without the Spirit. In 2:14-15 Paul said that the person without the Spirit cannot understand the person with the Spirit because they are discerned only through the Spirit. The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments. The judges without the Spirit in the court cannot understand the spiritual world and conflicts which occur in the church. The person with the Spirit lives in a three-dimensional world while the person without the Spirit lives in a two-dimensional world. Paul said that we Christians have authority even to judge angels. (3) There are other reasons why we must not bring our cases to the worldly court.

Second, the way of the cross (why not rather?) (7-11) Look at verses 7-8. “***The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers and sisters.***” Most human conflicts are caused by pride and selfishness. Even though it is a small and trivial matter, if it hurts their pride, they fight to the end. Their pride is nothing worth fighting for when time passes. There is a saying in Korea that even a dog will not buy human pride. Some people never apologize for their wrongdoing if their pride gets hurt. Paul warned against their empty pride. Paul's message is simple: Why not rather be defeated for the sake of the Lord? Why not rather be wronged for the sake of your brother? Why not rather be cheated for the sake of the unity of the church? Why not just humble yourself to glorify God? Why not fix your eyes on Jesus? Proud people will not want to lose, will not sacrifice, will not be humble. They think that losing is evil and gaining is good. As a result, there is no cease of war and stress in themselves and in their family. Their pride brings conflict and causes division in the church.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus. Let us see how Jesus dealt with these problems? The way of the cross is the way of losing, the way of sacrificing, and the way of becoming weakened. I mean that Jesus lost his life on the cross for the sins of the world. Jesus sacrificed his life on the cross for the glory of God. Jesus became weak to make us strong. Jesus did not save his life on the cross to save us. Jesus did not open his mouth to save his pride but became silent like a lamb before the shearer. Jesus became an object of ridicule and shame to bear our pain and shame. In this way Jesus showed us a true victory. In this way Jesus taught us how to overcome the world. In this way Jesus showed us how to love each other. Why not rather be defeated for the sake of your brother’s pride? Why not rather be humiliated for the sake of the unity of the church or of your family? If you bring your own family problems in public, you are already defeated, humiliated, and disgraceful. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus and follow his example. Follow the way of the cross so that we may overcome the world and obey the love of God. Amen!

There is a story of a missionary who started his church in a small town in Africa. Not long after he moved there, he planted tomatoes in the front yard of his church. His joy was to see the tomatoes grow and to crop them someday. But one day all the tomatoes disappeared. Later he found that the townspeople took all of them even before they became ripe. The missionary got mad. He taught them the Ten Commandments. And he planted other tomatoes. But the same thing happened again. So, the missionary put a notice in the front yard, “Keep away from my tomato.” His notice worked. His tomatoes were saved, but the townspeople stopped coming to the church. One of his friends advised him to open his tomato yard for the townspeople. Then the townspeople came back to his church. Why not rather lose tomatoes to gain the hearts of the townspeople?

In verses 9-11 Paul encouraged them to remember God’s grace when they think about who they were before they were saved. They were the sexually immoral, idolaters, thieves, greedy, drunkards, slanderers, and swindlers. They were not worthy to enter the kingdom of God. But only by the grace of God and love of Christ they were washed, sanctified, justified. (11) Let us read verse 11. “***And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God***.” Amen!

Third, temples of the Holy Spirit (12-20) Many people say that they have unlimited freedom to do whatever they want to do. Indeed, we are free to think, free to choose, and free to go in the land of liberty. As Christians we enjoy true freedom in Jesus and through Jesus. In the past we were slaves to sin. But through faith in Jesus we received freedom from the slavery of sin. However, to us who enjoy such freedom, everything is permissible, but not everything is beneficial. Look at verses 12-13. “***I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything” --but I will not be mastered by anything. You say, “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both.” The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.***” In Paul’s day there were two main groups of philosophers in Greece, Epicureans and Stoic. (Ac 17:18) Epicureans said that happiness is their main goal followed by physical pleasure. The Stoics were the opposite of them. They said that we need self-control, even controlling our physical desire. But the root of both philosophies is gnostic dualism, which means that the spirit is good, and the body is evil. So, they despise their physical body if only their spirit is good. They allowed sexual immorality based on this humanistic dualism. But Paul strongly warned against this corrupted philosophy saying, “*The body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.*” He said that the body is not for sexual immorality, but for the Lord. Look at verse 14. “***By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also***.” Paul taught them bodily resurrection. As Jesus was raised with the resurrected body, so also, we will be raised with a body, a new body and resurrection body. Our body is not ignorable, but valuable for our glorious resurrection.

Paul added two more things for our understanding. Look at verse 15. “***Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never!***” When we have a holy communion, by eating bread and drinking wine, we believe that we become one with Christ and become parts of his body. Even though it seems symbolic, it is very significant for our relationship with Christ. Indeed, Jesus compared our relationship with him to a vine and branch relationship (Jn 15:5) If someone has a relationship with a prostitute, they become one with the prostitute because the two become one flesh. Paul’s message is, ‘do not corrupt your body with sexual immorality.’

He even commanded us to flee from sexual immorality. Look at verse 18. “***Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body***.” Why did Paul command us to flee from sexual immorality, not to fight against it? Sexual immorality is not a matter of fighting, but of fleeing as Joseph did from the temptation of Potiphar’s wife. When Joseph was tempted by her, he threw his cloak and ran away from her. (Ge 39:12) No one could fight against sexual immorality, even King David failed to its temptation. If you are tempted to watch immoral websites or movies, turn off the computer or leave the place. If you are surrounded by people who tell dirty jokes, leave them. Flee from sexual immorality and pursue God’s righteousness. (1 Ti 6:11)

Look at verses 19-20. “***Do you not 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***.” When God created men, he formed man from dirt, and he breathed his spirit through the man’s nose, and the man became a living being, which means that he became a spiritual being. (Ge 2:7) So, our bodies are a space or room which contains God’s spirit. Paul said that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. He meant that we meet God, worship Him, and have koinonia with Him in our heart. It is a place where the Holy Spirit works freely and effectively for God’s kingdom and for our salvation. When the Holy Spirit works actively in our bodies, our bodies and souls are alive. On the contrary, when evil spirits work actively in our hearts, our bodies become ill and die. Our physical and spiritual condition depends on which spirit we contain in our bodies. Paul said that the mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. (Ro 8:6) When our bodies are filled with evil spirits and fleshly desires, we die. When our bodies are filled with the Holy Spirit, we live and bear fruits of the Holy Spirit.

There was a young Christian in Korea who was struggling with his drinking and smoking. He knew that everything was permissible, but everything was not beneficial for him. One day he read today’s key verse, 1 Co 6:20. He learned that his body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, not a container for alcohol and a room for smoke. Since then, he has quit drinking and smoking. Instead, he filled himself with the living words and prayer. In order to make our bodies the temple of the Holy Spirit Jesus died on the cross. In order to purchase our sinful body from Satan, Jesus paid the price through his blood. Therefore our bodies are not our own, but Christ’s. We were all crucified with Christ and we no longer live, but Christ lives in us. (Gal 2:20). Therefore we must honor God with our bodies which were purchased by the precious blood of Christ Jesus!

Let us fill our hearts with the Holy Spirit so that the Holy Spirit may work mightily and freely in us for His glory and for his kingdom. Amen!