

1 Corinthians 6

by John Nelson Darby

John Nelson Darby's sermon on 1 Corinthians 6 emphasizes the sanctity of the body as a temple of the Holy Spirit and the importance of grace in Christian relationships.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 6:1

Topics: "The Body as a Temple", "Christian Conduct"

Description

John Nelson Darby addresses the issues of legal disputes among believers and the moral corruption present in the Corinthian church, emphasizing that believers should bear wrongs rather than seek justice in secular courts. He highlights the significance of the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit, urging Christians to live in a manner that reflects their identity as members of Christ. Darby also discusses the transformative power of sanctification and justification, asserting that believers are called to glorify God with their bodies, which are not their own but belong to the Lord. He warns against the influence of worldly habits and stresses the importance of spiritual discernment in everyday life, reminding the church of their future role in judging the world and angels.

Transcript

We come now to details of laxity as to going to law with unbelievers, to doing wrong instead of bearing it; and to the question of meats. Also he turns back to the great snare at Corinth, that is, its corruption through the flesh; and with that we get the individual as the temple of God.

It is very remarkable how, in the New Testament, the highest and most wonderful things of Christ are very often brought in and are approximated to ordinary life. Here they are said to be going to judge angels. The Spirit of God brings in the glories of another world and throws their light right into the commonest things here below. There is no other way of judging them like that. If he is telling a servant not to purloin, he gives the whole scope of Christianity for the motive in Titus 2:9-14. And here these Corinthians were for squabbling at law: "Why," says he, "you are going to judge the world, yea, angels!" So again, in contrast with fornication, he says, Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. It is the revelation of such motives brought to bear on everyday conduct that is so wonderful. Flesh is there, and you have to apply these elevated things to judge it. Chapter 12 in the second epistle is most striking that way, in the beginning Paul being caught up to the third heaven, and at the end bemoaning the uncleanness among them. Here our very bodies are members of Christ being indwelt by the Holy Ghost.

222 The saints are to judge the world and the angels, when Christ comes again; in one sense all through the millennium, but in the main when He comes. Do not you know that? he says. They had, no doubt, been taught by him. Corinth was a dreadful place. When they wanted to say a man was living in luxury and debauchery, they called it Corinthianising. It was a proverb, "Everybody cannot go to Corinth." And by these things the church was infected. There always is the tendency to be affected by the atmosphere which surrounds us. The habits of the world have a kind of power that must be felt if there is not a spiritual power to resist them.

In verse 5 he speaks to their shame; the smallest - that is, in spiritual power - ought to be able to judge the things that pertain to this life. And he tells them they ought rather to suffer wrong than go to law before the unbelievers. They were in a terrible state, they came behind in no gift, and they came forward in no grace. His object is to avoid suits between brethren. The Lord says, we are not to resist evil. It is a question of grace, though righteousness is in it. If I can keep Christ's character, I would rather do so than keep my cloak. It is more sorrowful for the heart to lose Christ's character than to lose the cloak.

The Old Testament saints will be associated with Christ in the judgment of the world. But the apostle is from time to time writing about the resurrection and the rapture, and he thinks only of those to whom he is writing. He does say, "that they without us shall not be made perfect," and our Lord speaks of Abraham and others sitting down in the kingdom of God. But Paul is writing to certain persons for a certain purpose and to suit them, so that, while other dogmas may be behind, but very few passages refer directly to them. You will find truth in scripture connected at one end with God, and at the other end with man; but if you cut these ends off, you will find you have got a dry stick instead of a plant. And as it is connected with man, in order to get at the mind of scripture you must put yourself in the place of the people the apostle is addressing and in that way look at it.

223 I believe the saints of the Old Testament will be there because I see "thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them," etc. (Rev. 20:4). You gather it from passages in that kind of way. No doubt they will be raised and will not be made perfect without us but with us. The "saints of the high places" in Daniel 7 are the slain remnant under the beast. To be on the thrones of judgment, I suspect, is the lowest part of the glory. So in Laodicea the overcomer is to sit upon the throne. No saint will miss that.

Mark here in verse 11, "and such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." Sanctification is before justification; and when they come together, it is so habitually. You are sanctified to the blood of sprinkling; 1 Pet. 1:2. Now I think scripture speaks as plainly as possible of progressive sanctification; but still, when you have sanctification and justification spoken of together as two things, sanctification comes first. The reason is that, if you put that last, you would have the man with a perfect title to heaven and yet unfit for it. But again you never find fitness for heaven connected with progressive sanctification. There is plenty of scripture about sanctification as to the fact, "growing up to him in all things," "purify himself even as he is pure," these all shew progress when I am a Christian, but are not connected at all with fitness for heaven. On the contrary you get "giving thanks to the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," speaking of all Christians together. Then there is the poor thief who went straight to paradise; of course he was fit for it. Scripture is plain enough on progressive sanctification too: that is likeness to Christ here.

A man is set apart to God, like a stone in a quarry, and the Spirit of God takes him out; he is quickened by the Holy Ghost and put into the value of Christ's work. "Sanctified by blood" is in Hebrews; which is merely that now this covenant is brought in, for He died for the nation, and the blood of the covenant was shed, and God lays the ground for the people to come in under it; but if they did not, that lay with them. But 'sanctified to blood' (1 Peter 1:2) is by the Spirit of God. Sanctification of the Spirit is not in Hebrews at all, except that we have a glimpse of it in "follow after holiness." Having been washed in the passage we are considering is the development of the truth, speaking of the filth they were in. It is application of the word: "Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you"; and he gives the character of that as being sanctified and justified. If "sanctified by God the Father" in Jude is right, the meaning is He did it in His counsels in grace.* You get no work without the whole Trinity. In the miracles of Christ He says, "the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." "My Father worketh hitherto and I do work." Then "If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils." So we are God's children, and have the life of Christ, and it is the Spirit of God we are quickened by.

{*See New Translation, "beloved in God the Father."}

224 Instead of the Trinity being some out of the way doctrine, it runs through the whole of the scriptures. Communion is with the Father, and with the Son, and with the Holy Ghost. Again in prayer "through him" - Christ - "we have access by one Spirit unto the Father." You first get it where it is so beautiful to me in the end of Matthew 3. There Christ is taking His place among the remnant and is baptised by John the Baptist - not that He needed repentance, of course. But then immediately you get heaven opened, and the Holy Ghost comes down, and the Father owns Him as the Son. And there I get my place as a Christian sealed with the Holy Ghost. I too am a son. Heaven is opened to me, and the Father owns me: and in all this I get the first full revelation of the Trinity, where Christ first takes our place in grace coming to fulfil righteousness: the first time heaven is opened: and here I get the place of a man in the counsels of God the first time the Son takes His place as a man. It is all the more striking because the next thing is that He takes the other side of our place: He is led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

Christ at His baptism says 'us'; but though others came acknowledging their sins, He had none to acknowledge, He came fulfilling righteousness; He was taking His place with the excellent of the earth, and that runs all through, Christ taking His place with His disciples. It is here that the question is raised whether He was a good Jew. "Doth not your master pay tribute?" they mean, to the temple service. And Christ says, "Of whom do the kings of the earth take tribute, of their own children or of strangers?" and when they say of strangers, He says, Then are the sons free. That is, they could not claim it of Him: "nevertheless, that we offend them not," He tells Peter to go to the sea and cast in a hook for a fish and in its mouth he should find a piece of money which he was to pay "for me and thee." He commands all the creation of God, and that very thing in which He shews divine knowledge and then divine power was the very thing in which He ranks Peter with Himself.

225 "Ye are washed" is the aorist middle in Greek, ("you have washed yourselves") constantly used in that way in a passive sense in the New Testament. What is commonly called passive in Hebrew is used as a reflective verb in the same way. As to "in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God," the Greek preposition en is constantly used thus; but "by" would be better in both cases. When it is anything of power, we have en as is well known, not for instrumental meaning, but 'in virtue of.' You cannot take a word in one language as answering exactly to another in another language: you will make all sorts of confusion if you do. From the different relationships of words, it would have conveyed a different thought to a Greek from its circumstances, though it is the same word that is used in different positions. You get

Paul passing over where he talks of honour and dishonour, from en to dia; that shows "by" is not quite identical; dia is the instrument, but en is not exactly that, but more intimate.

By all things lawful, not all expedient (v. 12), he means that there is no difference to him, but he will not allow anything to have power over him. The moment it governs, lust has power over him if it is only eating something nice. There are a number of details here next: meats for the belly, and the body not for fornication but for the Lord; also the Lord for the body. He has taken up the body as well as the soul, though He has not yet redeemed it out of its present state. It is for the Lord therefore and not for its own lusts. And what the Lord has done is, He has made it the temple of the Holy Ghost. It awaits its redemption in the sense of taking it into glory; my soul has the liberty of grace, and my body waits for the liberty of the glory, and all creation waits. Yet the body now belongs to the Lord, and He takes it for Himself, and the Holy Ghost dwells in it as a temple. "And in your spirits which are God's" in the last verse is a clause left out in all the best manuscripts.

226 When he says "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit," it is with the thought of authority. It is the Lord Himself you are joined to; the person is none less than the Lord Himself. But one could not intelligently say "members of the Lord," because then you lose the thought of lordship. Jesus is the personal name: He was raised individually, and if God raised Him up, He will also raise up all His members; Rom. 8:11. On the other hand, "God shall destroy both it and them," means there will be an end of them. Its present state is all destroyed. The whole topic is clear and shews the absurdity of the thoughts of annihilationists. Man is redeemed, the spirit returns to Him who gave it: God having breathed into his nostrils the breath or spirit of life, man became a living soul. But then these are distinct things, the spirit (it is plain) being that higher part in which we are in some sort of connection with God. In 1 Thessalonians 5:23, the spirit is that by which we are connected with God. God formed man's body out of the dust of the earth - not so the animals - and then breathed into man, and so he became alive. Notice the way of doing it too, God taking counsel about it: He had finished the whole creation and pronounced it good, but He did not say so of man. He finished with the animals, and then He says, "Let us make man," and so on. Man might be at enmity to God, but still there is a relationship to Him, be it bad or good. Hence misery is final, supposing it to be misery, because man has a nature to be so. And thence too the poet says, "we are his offspring." Take the bad part of a man and you see it, the mind of the flesh is enmity against God: even when wicked and bad, he has to do with God. In ordinary language the two words - soul and spirit - are used for one another.

"From all filthiness of flesh and spirit," is simply contrasting body and spirit. I get my spirit sanctified in an amazing way when I love God. But then clearly the soul, if you come to make the difference, is the lower part: there is the dividing apart of soul and spirit, the word of God can come in and make the difference between the two. In one sense I have a soul like an animal, though very much higher in character. As I said to the annihilationists, any stupid child in the streets knows that, if you stick a man, and all his blood runs from his body, he will die just like a pig. There is that animal life. The first proposition in logic is 'man is an animal.' But if he becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus, of course his identity is preserved, - as to who, but not as to what he was before. If you say what he was before, it is not the same. The soul is morally changed because I love God instead of hating Him.

227 In the case of dying the connection of soul and body is lost for the time, but it is not so when the body is changed, for the links go with the body. That was just the difficulty of the Sadducees, in supposing seven men with one wife, when they get into resurrection. In the flesh we have the devil's sin, that is, pride against God, and the spirit's sins in our bodies. In chapter 2:14 of this epistle, we have seen that it is the

natural man, the man without the Holy Ghost. A man is not a man without body, soul, and spirit. They may be separated for a little, as when he dies. Sometimes it is called, inner man and outer man, soul and body.

Spirit and soul are never separated; one is the higher part of the other, so to speak. The word of God is the only thing that can distinguish them. Philosophers were wrong, as Aristotle. To them it was merely mind and the animal soul, which loves, for instance, one's children. I have a mind that thinks about children, and so on: that is all right so far; and philosophers recognised that there was this in man, but they went no farther than this intellect. We know there is a link between man and God, and that is responsibility too, though now man has got into enmity. The "dividing asunder" in Hebrews 4 is that which just gives the difference between the two, for it cuts them into two. Heathens saw the superiority to beasts, but I do not believe the intellect which they owned has anything to do with God. All philosophy is a perfect delusion, intellect has nothing to do with God at all. God may act upon it: that is another thing.

It is not, of course, as with a stone that God acts upon man, but it is through his conscience. It is not the activity of man's intellect at all. A man of considerable intellectual powers is all the more likely to go wrong. God may take a chosen vessel and fit it for Him to act in and by, but never for the vessel to act. Wherever the vessel acts, it shuts God out. That is what Paul insists on so much in the opening of this epistle. And faith is never in the intellect; and, what is more, the intellect never knows a truth. Intellect knows consequences, but these are not truth. That is, truth is not the object of intellect, but of testimony. This is where the difference lies. You tell me something and I believe you, but the thing that receives truth (on, I believe, a testimony) is not intellect. "He that receiveth his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true."

228 The very thing by which man proves there must be a God is a proof that he cannot know God. Take this world: there is evidence of skill, there must have been a designer, some one must have made it. So with a watch (the common illustration), some one must have made it. So to the infidel geographer they brought once a globe; and when he asked, who made that? "Nobody" was the reply. What do you mean? I ask who made that globe? "Nobody"; and of course, he was confounded. I am not capable of conceiving of such a thing existing without a cause; but if I see it there, I must get a Former of it. I am so constituted that I cannot think of such a thing without a cause. This is exactly what it amounts to. God must have wrought: without a cause you cannot think it out. I cannot conceive of anything existing without finally a causing cause. But a cause uncaused is above me! The thing that proves He must be proves I cannot tell what He is. Logic says, If so-and-so is true, then so-and-so must be; but this does not say that it is, which is a very different thing to my soul. If I say "must be," that is a mere inference. The moment I get a testimony that it is, how different! I get a divine testimony, and set to my seal that God is true. This is faith, divine faith. One thing flows from another, and I cannot help inferring. That is the constitution of man, and he must think according to what he is, he cannot think otherwise.

Intellect never discovered anything in divine things; it may deduce correct conclusions, but it never can go above itself. That is another way of looking at it. If intellect pretends to go above itself, it is an absurdity on the face of it. If it pretends to rise to God, He is not the true God at all, but the mere conclusion of my mind. God can act on me, as physic acts on man; but that is not what I am. God has given us receptivity so far as that goes. It is as simple as ABC. Here is God, and if I bring Him in, it closes reasoning; and if I leave Him out, everything is false. I may have the farthings, but no pounds in the account. Nine-tenths of our ideas come from relationship, not from intellect; just as a child knows its father. Relationship is never known by reason: mind is fond of a kind of metaphysical reasoning about this, but it is all folly. The moment relationship is formed, all moral duty flows from it, and from it alone. Duty has nothing to do with intellect. This it is that makes us totally dependent. Man at the outset tried to get out of dependence on

God, and really got into dependence on the devil and his own lusts. "By every word of God shall man live" was dependence and obedience, and that was where Christ was: it is the proper place of every intelligent creature, who ought to be both dependent and obedient.

229 Then we have here that the body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. He acts on the soul and on the heart - Christ dwells in our hearts by faith - but the body is His temple, and therefore it is to be used accordingly. A great deal of mischief springs from not recognising this. The body is only in its right place when it is a vessel which I am just using for God. The body of the Christian is a member of Christ, because he is His, and I am this, and my body is part of Him. It is a temple of God, because the Holy Ghost dwells there. My body is His temple; it is simple statement: but the Holy Ghost is to guide me. "Ye are not your own." We have the two great leading principles of Christian condition: the body the temple; and I am bought with a price; and for both reasons we must glorify God bodily, because it is purchased, and is possessed by the Holy Ghost dwelling in it. This gives a great distinctness to the reality of the personal presence of the Holy Ghost. Too often people talk about the Spirit working in their hearts, with the thought only of a mere influence. Even that does produce a certain state of heart in such, it is true; but that my body is His temple gives reality and personality clearly and in power.

Well, then, I am not to go and abuse the temple of God. This is peculiar to saints since redemption. "He that is joined to the Lord" is a real thing. If I am joined to the Lord, I get all the fulness of Him that dwells in me; which shews the great difference between life and union. People say we are united by faith, and again by life; but neither is true; we are united in life, but the union is by the Holy Ghost. The Old Testament saints might be united in heart and spirit, but this was no union as in the New Testament saints.

230 Persons dwelling together is not a body. There could not be a body until Christ was at the right hand of God: and you must get the head before you get the body. You have a divine Son, the Son of God, quickening whom He will, but no body formed until the Holy Spirit is given. A person cannot be said to be a member of Christ until he be sealed. Take the apostle for three days and nights. The saints were not the body of Christ until the day of Pentecost. There may be souls in that state now, quickened but not having received the gospel of their salvation; and so doubting and fearing. But we should not judge of souls because they say, "I doubt," and "I do not know": so many think it is presumption to say, "I am a child of God." They will tell you, "I am afraid to talk in that way. I have a humble hope things will be all right; and sometimes I feel happy." Now suppose I hear at their prayers, one saying, "Father," when speaking to God, and another saying, "Be merciful to me a sinner," then I learn the difference.

Though one call upon God as Father, it is far happier for a soul to see clearly; but when a soul cries Abba Father, he has just the same title to the Lord's table as I have. The principle is very simple. The Lord's supper has the character of the one body, inasmuch as "ye are partakers of that one loaf." If one calls God Father, he is a member of Christ, being sealed with the Holy Ghost. We are not always judges; but the principle is simple. The man that is sealed with the Holy Ghost is a member of the body of Christ, and the Lord's supper is a sign of the unity of the body. As a member of the body, that is his place. Intelligence is not the test of communion. I do not bring my degree of knowledge of what I have, but I come because I am a member of Christ; and if another comes, of course it is the same thing. The consciousness that God is his Father is upon the testimony of the Holy Ghost. He must have faith in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, not merely in His Person; he receives the Holy Ghost, and is, of course, member of the body of Christ.

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