

Corinthians: Christian Conduct

by Stephen Kaung

The sermon explores the critical issues of unity, discipline, and proper conduct among believers as taught in 1 Corinthians.

Duration: 1:04:24

Scripture: Isaiah 64:6, Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 1:10, 1 Corinthians 6:7, 1 Corinthians 6:12, 1 Corinthians 10:23, 1 Corinthians 10:31-32

Topics: "Christian Living", "Holy Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the importance of understanding our position as believers in Christ. He emphasizes that we are free from the bondage of the law and have been saved by grace. However, he warns against abusing this freedom and causing division among fellow believers. The preacher encourages practicing four principles in our daily conduct: knowing our position, living in love, relying on the power of the Holy Spirit, and glorifying God in our bodies. He reminds us that we are called to be witnesses and testimonies to the Lord, and that our actions should reflect this.

Transcript

This is Monday morning, October the 8th, 1973, in Richmond, Virginia. Ministry is being given through Brother Stephen Kohn. And we will read from 1 Corinthians, chapter 6. 1 Corinthians, chapter 6, verse 10, verse 12.

1 Corinthians, chapter 6, verse 12. All things are lawful to me, but all things do not profit. All things are lawful to me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

Chapter 10, verse 23. All things are lawful, but all are not profitable. All things are lawful, but all do not edify.

Verse 31. Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all things to God's glory. Give no occasion to stumbling, whether to Jews or Greeks, or the church of God.

Even as I also please all in all things, not seeking my own profit, but that of the many, that they may be saved. That's all we'll read for this morning. The church at Corinth is full of problems.

But we do thank the Lord that we have Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Because if we don't have that letter, if Paul's letters are all like his prison letters, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, we may wonder

whether there is any word for us. Now, no doubt, the letters to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, they are for us.

They are relevant to us. Because they show us God's purpose, God's plan, and what God wants. We need to know that.

And yet sometimes when we look around, look at the condition, the situation of God's church today, we feel we are so far, far off. Sometimes it discourages us. We wonder if God has something to say to us in our present situation.

Situation that is filled with problems of all kinds. Now thank God for the first Corinthians. Because there you'll find they have all kinds of problems.

And God has a special word for them. So in that sense I believe 1 Corinthians has a very special message for us. It is relevant in a very special way to our situation today.

For the past we have mentioned two things. One is in the church in Corinth, there is this big problem of unity. They are not united.

They are all believers. And yet they are divided. Some say I'm a Paul, some say I'm a Paul.

Some say I'm a Peter. And some will come out and say I'm in a very special way of Christ. Now is it not true that this is our problem today? Among God's people I think the greatest problem we have is this matter of unity.

We are not one. We are not united. Even though sometimes we may say we are one in Christ.

And yet our action doesn't seem to correspond with our confession. It is a practical question. You know in Paul's letter to the Corinthians he is not dealing with theory.

He is dealing with practical issues. With practical life. In theory we all know we are one in Christ.

But how about our practice? And that is what we find in faith to unity. If only our eyes would be centered upon Christ. And not be distracted to man.

Even to spiritual man such as Paul and Peter and Apollo. Then in practice we will be one. Last night we fell asleep on the second big problem with the church in Corinth.

And that is in the church at Corinth there is no discipline. Here you'll find a group of believers. And I believe it's not a small number.

Because if you read the book of Acts you'll find many, many of them. There are many members in the church at Corinth. And yet there is no discipline.

One person has been so terrible. A thing that even you cannot find among the nations. And yet this person is not disciplined.

This person goes on as if nothing happened. And the whole church, the conscience of the whole church is so insensitive that people allow such things to remain. And the church does not take any disciplinary action.

There is no discipline. They may even go for themselves as being very liberal. Most tolerant.

Very loving. But there is sin in their midst. Not that way.

So brothers and sisters as we look at our situation today among God's people I think there is one thing above many other things that is very much needed among God's people in the church. And that is discipline. As a matter of fact if there is no discipline there is no reality.

If there is no discipline there is no establishment. Discipline is very important in the building up of the church. So last night we mentioned that from the Bible you can find three different ways of discipline.

The fatherly discipline. The brotherly discipline. And the church discipline.

Now we will not go back into these this morning but I just mentioned it. So here you'll find another very helpful word in 1 Corinthians. How we meet discipline in the church.

This morning we would like to enter into another area. And that is this matter of Christian conduct. God has put a number of people together.

How should they conduct themselves towards one another? Christian conduct in relation to one another. And that is another area that you'll find very much lacking in the church. Here you'll find in the church at Corinth a brother will go to court to sue another brother.

Probably that other brother has defrauded him in some way. And because of that he feels that the right, the wrong must be righted. And he reports to the court in a way.

Trying to have his wrong being a brother to another brother. Here you'll find in the church in Corinth not only this matter of suing one another but evidently their marriage life is very least. And that you'll find in the 7th chapter of 1 Corinthians.

Evidently they are very least in their marriage relationship. And further than that you'll find many of them think that they are intelligent. They have the knowledge so they go to the idol country to enjoy themselves in social activities.

So much so that those who are weak in conscience are being offended. And they don't care. They don't care.

In other words you'll find among the Corinthian believers they are very much lacking in Christian in relation with one another. Brothers and sisters I wonder if this is also a practical problem among God's people. It is true.

No one can be saved by his good conduct. Once upon a time we all tried to behave ourselves but because our salvation was dependent upon our good deeds. We thought that if we had good deeds to present to God then we would be accepted.

We were like caving of oaves. Taking the produce of our own land and try to offer to God. But we knew it wasn't sufficient.

As in the book of Isaiah you'll find our righteousness are as filthy red. Even though we may think we have accumulated quite some righteousness. But when we try to present them to God they were filthy red.

Not only red that cannot cover our nakedness before God but filthy red unclean before God. So more or less I think we like the Corinthians. Probably when we are convicted by the Holy Spirit of our sins our first reaction will be we will try to behave.

We will try to do something good. We will try to accumulate some merit so that we might be saved. And then one day by the grace of God our eyes will open to see that we are not saved by wit we are saved by grace.

So thank you. And you know the same thing happened to the Corinthian believers. That's how they came to the Lord.

It was Jesus Christ and him crucified that gave the gospel that saved them. The Corinthians in their former days they were very wicked in their behavior. Because there is a proverb at that time.

You act like a Corinthian. It means that you live a very wicked life. But thank God through the gospel of Jesus Christ they were brought to God.

Not by wit but by faith by grace. But brothers and sisters after we are saved how about our behavior? It is true that we cannot be saved by our good conduct. Our good conduct is not the cause for our salvation.

But after we are saved there should be good behavior. As evidence, as effect of the salvation. Not as merit, no.

But as peace of our salvation. The life of Christ is in us. And with the life of Christ in us it should be manifested.

Means a change. There should be a change. There should be a testimony to the Word.

It is strange to say with the Corinthian believers they had received the salvation of the Lord. They were saved. Their sins were forgiven.

They were washed. And yet somehow they went on to live as they lived. It wasn't because they did not have the life of Christ in them.

They did. And most probably the Holy Spirit who dwelt in them because they had the Holy Spirit. In the first letter to the Corinthians Paul said you are the temple of God.

And God dwelt in you by his Spirit. They had the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit must have spoken to them.

And yet somehow you find their behavior, their conduct towards one another were such that were a shame to the Lord. Now why? I wonder if it is not because of a misnotion. A wrong notion.

We are not saved by our good deeds. We are saved by grace. So after we are saved are we not under grace and no longer under law? Are we not free? We can do anything that we like.

It will not matter anymore. Because after all good deeds is nothing in the sight of God. It is the grace of our Lord Jesus.

In other words it is an abuse. A misunderstanding of the grace. Probably that is the reason.

They feel themselves so free. They enjoy the liberty as they did in Christ. Therefore they feel they can do anything.

Brothers and sisters is it not true with believers today? You find there are two different schools. Of course one school is you must have good deeds. Because without good deeds you cannot be saved.

And with that kind of teaching you find people do try to have good deeds. But of course they are not accepted by God. Because in the sight of God these are bad deeds.

Bad deeds. We need to be delivered from bad works. Even good works.

And yet you will find especially among the so called. The preaching of the grace of God is wonderful. It is the gospel of grace.

We are saved by grace. But somehow there seems to be something missing. After we have received the grace of God there seems to be a lack of emphasis as to how we should behave.

Now you are saved. You will go to heaven. Everyone who is saved will go to heaven.

But what about today? What about our lives on this earth from day to day? How shall we live before God and before man? I am afraid there is something missing. Just yesterday a few brothers, young brothers we were talking together after the morning meeting. And one brother said he said for a few minutes he felt that something was missing.

It is true we are saved by grace. It is true that we will go to heaven one day. But is there anything for our present days in the word of God? We are saved.

We will all be taken to him. We will all go to heaven. Then some people will say why bother? Why should we deny ourselves take up our cross and follow the Lord? After all you will go to heaven just like your brother who may live a very loose life enjoy himself on this earth and reject all the cross but after all he is saved by grace.

Why be so foolish? We will all go to heaven eventually. We are all saved by grace. So that brother said for you he felt something was missing somewhere.

And you know when you read the letters of those Corinthians how did Paul answer these Corinthians believers? These Corinthians believers make misuse of grace. Liberty. Freedom.

We can do anything we like but Paul said your body is not yours. You are redeemed by the precious blood. You are the temple of God.

It is true you are saved by grace but grace has saved you has redeemed you to God. You are no longer your own so you must glorify God in your body. It is not yours it is God.

And furthermore Paul said no one who is unrighteous can enter into the kingdom of God. There is more than to go into heaven. There is the kingdom of God to come and only those whose righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Pharisees and the scribes can enter into the kingdom of God.

You remember in Matthew the Lord said accept your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees you cannot enter into the kingdom of God. By the grace of God we will all go to

heaven. That is true but that doesn't mean that everyone who is saved will enter into the kingdom of God that will come upon this earth one day.

To reign with Christ for a thousand years requires the righteousness of the Pharisees and Paul said you are in a race you have to so run that you may get the prize. Otherwise you will lose the prize. It is true you will not lose your salvation but you will lose the prize, you will lose the reward.

And Paul even mentioned, now look at the Israelites they all came out of Egypt they all ate the heavenly manna they all drank of the water out of the smitten rock they all were baptized unto Moses for the rescue and yet because they tempted God they did not believe in God because they sinned the result was they fell and only Joshua and Caleb and the new generation entered into the kingdom. Paul said am I not free? I am free. I got it my body to bring it to captivity let I preach to others and I myself am not free.

So brothers and sisters here you will find there is something very important in our practical daily living and that is something you will find very much like these brothers and sisters are saved by grace and they seem to enjoy their liberty so much over enjoying their liberty and look what a mess they create one will oppress the other and one will stumble on the other there isn't that proper christian and I'm afraid this is true with us today God's people seem to forget that they are saved to be a witness and a testimony to the Lord God's people seem to forget that their bodies are not their own we are purchased in the blood we must glorify God in our blood not in any things that we are accumulated merits as it were not at all but because we are not our own we have to glorify God in our

body and we are not in a race we must so run as to obtain the prize and this is an area I'm afraid which is very much very much needed in the case of that but when Paul deals with this matter of practical christian conduct he deals with it according to certain principles and here we will try to maintain these principles and try to apply these principles to various problems in other words the way to correct our conduct is not by laying down rules and regulations for every item that will put us under the law as it were but the way to deal with our conduct is to know certain principles and then by the power of the Holy Spirit to apply these principles to our daily life and that is the way so here you find first Paul said all things are lawful to me but not all things are possible that is the

first principle all things are lawful to me Paul is one who has been delivered Paul is one who is no longer under law but under grace Paul is one who can look at all things as lawful in other words the word lawful is the same word but in different forms as my right my liberty all things are lawful I have my right to all things I have liberty in all things because Christ has already delivered me he has already saved me I'm a free man of course there are things that are not lawful for instance the thing that one man in Corinth has committed that the nations have not heard of is certainly unlawful but Paul does not refer to these things because to a Christian to a believer he should know better in other words when Paul said all things are lawful to me he does not include those things which

are unlawful even in the sight of the world he does not include these things when he said all things are lawful to me he is relating all things to him a person who has been saved and delivered a person who is in Christ a person who has the life of Christ in him a person in whom the Holy Spirit dwells a person who is in fellowship with the Lord now to him these unlawful things of course do not need to be mentioned because you won't do them but the problem today is Paul says all things are lawful to me I'm a free man I have the liberty I have the right to do anything that I here like to do but not all things are lawful it is true dear brothers and sisters we are free persons we are free by Christ once upon a time we were under bondage

we had not that liberty we could not do what we wanted

to do and we did what we did not want to do because we were not free but today we are free we can do what we want to do and we can not do what we do not want to do because the Lord has freedom we have the freedom to do that is our position in Christ no doubt not all things are you can do these things but are they possible are they possible now in the case of the Corinthians here you find a brother goes to court to sue another brother and to this brother he may think it is a lawful thing to do it is my right because my brother has befallen me I must correct that wrong I have every right to sue him at the court so that he will give back what he has owed me it is not an unlawful thing he feels the liberty to do that but is it profitable is it profitable in 1 Corinthians 6 it emphasizes more

on your own self does it profit you when you go to the court to sue your brother in order to regain your loss it is true physically materially you may have your loss recovered but spiritually is it profitable to you when you do such things such lawful things will it damage your spiritual life is the loss worthwhile or the gain worthwhile by going to court oh brothers and sisters you know there is something which is very deep in our flesh and that is our loss if it is unlawful we know we should but if it is lawful if it is our liberty if it is our right and that's the place where we exercise our right we take our liberty because we feel we have every right to do it is lawful but when we are doing things of that kind outwardly we may gain something but how about our spiritual well being is

it profitable not all things are profitable sometimes we do things that will really hurt our spiritual life think of the spirit of this brother when he goes to court to sue another brother think of his spirit he may do a lawful thing but instead of the spirit of law of sacrifice of willing to suffer here is a spirit of redemption a salvation life spiritual life so Paul says why do you go to a court to sue your brother is there no wise brother in the church that can help to solve this problem why do you go to the Gentiles whom you despise they are not the Lord you are the Lord and you go to them and Paul even go a little a step further and says why are you not willing to be defrauded it is a matter of whether it is profitable maybe brothers and sisters you think that we don't have such

problems but we do we do and of course this profit whether it is profitable of course it includes also when do you are doing such a thing to your brother will it be profitable but the answer is in chapter 6 is more on yourself in chapter 10 is more on your brother because you find this is repeated in chapter 10 all things are lawful but not all things are profitable but in that case the answer says is more towards yourself when we are doing something brothers and sisters we need to consider if I do it will it be profitable to my brother or to my sister if it is not profitable to him or to her even if it is lawful it is something so here you find this is the first point the first principle of Christian conduct whenever something comes up we need to go to the Lord and say Lord yes you have

freed me I am a free person all things are lawful to me but is this profitable when I do it will it hurt my spiritual life will it bring profit to my brothers and sisters am I seeking their profit and of course the profit here does not mean material physical temporal profit it means the eternal spiritual all things are lawful to me I will not be brought under the power of anything a Christian is free all things are lawful you have the liberty to do these things but Paul said I will not be brought under the power of anything if anything will king of saints enslave me it is a lawful thing but it will enslave me instead of I am the master it will master my life in other words I have to do it if I don't do it I cannot I cannot live I am depending upon it this is something that has hold of my

life I am under its control now if such thing happens something is very wrong because you are under control of a thing with a Christian we are under the control of our Lord the Lord our life is under his control he is our God he is our Lord but when we are under control of anything however lawful may be that thing something is basic look at the Corinthians in this matter of meat probably in the early days among the Corinthians they had the same problem as we have today meat price is high and you know because meat price is high you can get cheaper meat in the market because the Corinthians they offer sacrifices to their idols in the temple and after they offer the sacrifice the meat belongs to the priest and of course the priest of those idol temples they cannot consume all the meat all

the meat they cannot consume all the meat so the way they do it is they will eat part of the meat but the greater part of the meat they will take it to the market to resell it and the profit will go to the priest and usually they resell those meat cheaper because I mean they they do not care you know so those meat that has been offered to idols are sold in the market at a much cheaper price so if you want to buy cheaper meat now that is the meat you look for but of course some people with a weak conscience who are newly saved when they buy these meat and eat them they feel they are eating the meat that is offered to idols in other words they feel they are being defiled being defiled by things offered to idols but and if the urge for meat is so strong you have to have meat but you cannot

afford it so instead of living without meat for God's sake meat controls your life you have to have it and therefore against your weak conscience you buy the meat that has been offered to idols and eat them now brothers and sisters all things are lawful but I will not be brought under the power of idols something you must have in a sense you are a free man and yet it has controlled your life it has controlled your life it has become a master to you instead of you a master to that thing when such thing happens you know you have done wrong now brothers and sisters we are the Corinthian believers of course meat is a problem but you can multiply this and apply this to many things many things in our lives because we are free or not but are you under the control of it you can apply this to to

many things not only to eating and drinking to some habits of your life even to your relationship with people or even you can apply to spiritual things if a spiritual thing should dominate you instead of the Lord something is wrong something is wrong we need to be free from the control of all because that's what Christ has liberated us he has liberated us from all things and he has put us under his sole control we are under him but we are above all of him so here you find another principle that will govern our Christian conduct and you can apply it as the Holy Spirit will convict you and lead you it can be applied to many many things many many things and number three Paul said all things are lawful whether eating or drinking of course they are lawful God has created us in such a way that

we need to eat and to drink for the sustenance of our life that drinking and eating are perfectly lawful do all things to the glory of God it is true all things are lawful but when I do certain things will God be glorified if God is not glorified don't do it don't do it if I eat, I eat for the glory of God if I drink I drink for the glory of God if my eating and drinking will bring shame and disgrace to God then even in such lawful things as eating and drinking you abstain from it now in the case with the Corinthians of course it is more than just buying meat from the market you know the Corinthians their social life is such they have lots of parties and when they have a party they usually have their party in the temple just like today when you have a party you have a club, country club

that's where you have a party so their social life is so involved with their temple when a person, a neighbor has a party he will have the seat served in the temple that's the place they go for social life so the problem

with the Corinthians believers is now they are safe they no longer go to the temple to offer sacrifice that they know but they are cut off from all social life because all the parties are held in the temple if they don't go to the temple then they will have no social life and they cannot enjoy themselves they like to eat, they like to drink they like to have a good time but all the parties are held in the temple, now what should they do? they know that they shall have nothing to do with either they know that but they are not willing to pay the price of following the Lord

even in the lonely way they still long to have these parties they want to enjoy their life they want to continue their social life with their neighbors so when they are invited to these parties now what do they do? they try to rationalize some say we have the knowledge idols are nothing they are not real gods they are nothing we know there is only one god and if the idols are nothing then the temple built for the idols are nothing and the food sacrificed to the idols are nothing so that shouldn't affect us at all we have the knowledge so with that knowledge and you cannot argue with that knowledge their knowledge is a true knowledge it is true so based upon their rationalization based upon their knowledge they continue to go to the temple and enjoy themselves now brothers and sisters you

cannot question their knowledge their knowledge is real but their motive is wrong they are not glorifying God they are enjoying themselves in other words it may be lawful to them it is lawful to them because they have the knowledge the reason for their going is they want to enjoy themselves they are not doing it to glorify God brothers and sisters very often we have the same problem we like to enjoy ourselves and we try to rationalize but the point is is God glorified? is God glorified? if God is not glorified then that is not something that we should do because our body is not ours it is the Lord we must glorify God in the body so this is the third principle and then the fourth one Paul said do not give occasion for stumbling to your brother all things are lawful to you if you have the

knowledge all things are lawful you can do it but you must consider your brother if what you do is lawful to you but it will stumble your brother don't, not for your own sake for your brother's sake because knowledge comes up but love, only love so do all things that will edify all people that will build up people and not destroy here you'll find these Corinthians some of them they profess to have the knowledge so they go to the temple and enjoy the party they completely forget, neglect those young believers those who are newly saved because they worshipped the idol before therefore their conscience is bothered they cannot enter into the temple they cannot sit there and eat the food that has been offered to the idol because in doing that they feel they are heading apart with the idol

their conscience bothers them but then they see these big brothers marching into these temples and enjoy themselves and their support they say well if they can do it why not we? but when they go into the temple and enjoy themselves their conscience is not at peace if anything is done without a peaceful conscience that is sin so to them they have committed sin they have committed sin they are stumbled stumbled and Paul says how can you stumble a brother whom the Lord has made? how can you do that? if my eating meat will stumble my brother then I will not eat meat I will not eat meat nothing wrong with eating meat but if you stumble your brother Paul said I rather not eat it when you go to the market and buy meat and eat fine if you are invited by some people to eat with us whatever is put

on the table you eat but whenever somebody mentions that this is temple not for your own sake now brothers and sisters it is true some people have weak conscience we need to have a sensitive conscience but not a weak conscience a weak conscience is due to the lack of knowledge we shall help these brothers and sisters with weak conscience with truth so that they may be delivered from their weak

conscience but before they are delivered you have to respect even their weak conscience you cannot go by your strong conscience you have to go by their weak conscience and this is love this is love and only love otherwise it will not brothers and sisters if we see these four principles and by the power of the Holy Spirit practice these principles in our daily conduct in relation to one another what

a difference it will make and these are very practical so first of all we know our position we know our position is we are free in Christ that is our position we are not being brought back under the law you know there is no contradiction here in Romans Paul said you are not under law you are under grace in Galatians Paul said do not go back and put yourself under the bondage of the law because Christ has already liberated you it is true we are free brothers and sisters we who are saved we are free and to us all things are lawful we have our right we have our liberty thank God for that this is our position but be careful at how to use your right Paul said am I not free am I not an apostle can I not do like the rest like Peter bringing his wife and travel with him can I not do with the rest

to have my needs physical needs supplied as I bring the gospel to you but Paul said I do not use my right I do not use up my right and this is something that is very important we are free all things are lawful but does it mean that you have to use up all your right can you for Christ sake forsake some of your rights in order that you may save others in order that you may help your brothers and sisters in order that you may glorify God are you ready and you know it is in giving up our right for Christ sake not to use up our liberty for Christ sake for the sake of our brothers that is love that is love and when there is such love among God's people the church and God is glorified so we thank God because of the man in the church in Carlton we are giving some insight into those spiritual

principles that need to be applied to our relationship with one another so may the Lord use these words to help us in a practical way let us pray O Lord we do praise and thank thee because thou has freed us all things are lawful to us we who are in Christ but Lord we are undergrad we are free but we are undergrad thy life in us is our law we praise and thank thee because thou has given us the liberty to choose thou give us the strength to do that which will please Lord do not allow us to be so self centered as to live for ourselves but Lord enable us to forfeit our right even our liberty for thy sake and for the sake of our brothers O Lord fill our hearts with thy love that we may really seek the advantage of others that we may not be under the control of anything that in all things we do

we may glorify thee edify our brothers and not be a stumbling block to any O Lord do help us to see all these things maintain us by thy spirit and with us all in the name of our Lord Jesus and for his glory alone Amen

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