

## **Church Rules**

1 Corinthians Overview

(preached Pine Grove 4/4/16; Sunday PM)

### **Introduction**

My grandfather was a thrifty man..

He was not rich by any stretch of the imagination,  
but he could make a dollar go pretty far..

For many years, my grandmother had driven a 1976  
white Ford Granada,....

But in 1986, my granddad probably made his biggest  
purchase ever when he bought her a brand new  
Chrysler 5th avenue...

It was bright white with all the extras...

Digital clock...

Digital radio...

Tilt steering...

Cruise control...

Power windows and locks...

But the feature that sticks out in my mind the most on the car was the leather seats...

But mind you, they weren't any normal leather seats...

Chrysler describes the leather on these car as rich Corinthian leather...

In fact, Chrysler hired an actor named Ricardo Montalban to do their commercials and he is the one who is best known for calling them "Corinthian" leather...

One time, Montalban was asked what was Corinthian leather was, he responded...

"It is normal leather with a fancy name."

It is interesting that Chrysler chose Corinthian to describe their leather..

At the time, Corinth was not a major city in the world and it had not been for some time..

However, the town was so luxurious in its day, that the name Corinthian still sounds fancy enough to sell cars that don't really have Corinthian leather...

Tonight, we have arrived at the book of 1 Corinthians...

It is the first of two letters that God inspired Paul to write to the church at Corinth..

Now to get a full understanding of the letter, you first have to understand a few things about the church at Corinth..

When you think Corinth, you need to think Las Vegas, NV...

Because Corinth was a city of gross immorality..

If you look at a map of ancient Corinth, you will see that it lies on a thin strip of land..

That connects the upper and lower parts of Greece...

And that made the city of Corinth a stop for many travelers going from southern Greece to northern Greece...

And where there are travelers, you will find all sorts of sin because they often bring it from other places they have visited.

Not only was there a lot of foot traffic through Corinth, sailors also stopped there often as well..

In fact, many ships were actually taken out of the water and rolled across the city to the gulf on the north side to save time and avoid the risky trip around southern Greece...

All of those travelers and sailors and merchants contributed to Corinth being the Las Vegas of its day.

Now, God in his sovereignty had planted a church there through the missionary journeys of Paul...

On Paul's second missionary journey, he went into the synagogue at Corinth and preached Christ and people were saved..

And the church at Corinth was born...

But it was not without its problems, and the biggest was this...

The believers in the church at Corinth could never break away from the corrupt culture that surrounded them..

And often brought the immorality of the city into the church...

Therefore, God inspired Paul to write the church a letter to mainly tell them how to conduct themselves as Christians in church and in life...

And from that letter, we get the book of 1 Corinthians...

It is a rather straightforward book that deals with issues in any church...

So, let's dive into this book tonight and gain a bird's eye view of what Paul wrote in this letter to the church at Corinth...

We will start in the chapters 1-4 with....

## **I. Disunity in the Church (1-4)**

In chapter 1, Paul addresses a great problem in many churches and that is the problem of division...

Look at verse 10 and following....

*10 Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all [e]agree and that there be no [f]divisions among you, but that you be [g]made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. 11 For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. 12 Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ." 13 [h]Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized [i]in the name of Paul?*

The people in the church at Corinth had divided loyalties...

Some liked the preaching of Paul...

Some liked the preaching of Apollos...

Some liked the preaching of Cephas or Peter...

And some were simply loyal to Christ alone...

Our fallen nature leads to division over personalities..

We line up behind the people we like, when we should only line up behind Christ..

Now, the question comes are denominations sinful?

And the answer to that is no, but I would also remind you that no denomination is perfect...

The only true unity is found in correctly interpreting the word of God...

I am loyal to the Word of God and not my denomination...

When a denomination breaks form the Word of God, it is time for God's people to break from that denomination..

But that doesn't always happen, and so we end with much division in the church...

The application for us is this...

Be careful who you follow in this world, and that includes the one talking to you right now...

The best of men are men at best, and every man must be held up to the words of the Bible...

No man is above the Word of God...

Paul then moves in the second half of chapter 1 into a passage of Scripture that describes the importance of the cross...

And that is a great place to put it because the cross reminds us that we all are on equal ground there...

Those who followed only Paul needed to be reminded that Paul needed the cross...

Those who followed Apollos and Peter needed to be reminded that those men needed the cross as well....

The cross is the great equalizer to divisions in the church...

Just like the President of the US puts on his pants one leg at a time...

All those who are saved in this life were saved in the same way as those who follow them...

No one can boast of being worthy to be followed because the ground at the foot of the cross is level for all men and women...



And Paul goes on to talk about that to finish off chapter 1...

Paul then returns to the problem of division again in chapter 3 and reminds the Corinthians that division and strife and jealousy over leaders shows that they are immature believers...

And I would remind us all that when we only associate with certain people, we are acting more like the world than we are like Christians...

Paul goes on to say that God uses all sorts of people in our lives to help us mature in the faith...

Some people give us the gospel..

Some people help us grow in our faith...

Some people call us out when we fall into sin...

God uses all those people in our life and none are more valuable than the other...

When people come to me and tell me that they listened to a real good sermon by someone else, I rejoice in that...

I am not the only preacher that you should be listening to...

Now, I would warn you that all preachers are not equal and some are in fact very dangerous...

But if you are benefitting from the preaching of another biblical preacher, I praise the Lord for that..

God uses all sorts of people in your life to grow you in your faith...

And who am I to think that I am the most important one...

This first section on division in the church closes in chapter 4, where Paul simply ends the discussion by telling the church that his strong words about their division were for their own good...

Paul love that church, and his love compelled him to warn them to refuse to divide over personalities...

This leads to chapters 5-6, where we will find Paul addressing..

## **II. Immorality in the Church (5-6)**

In this section, God inspires Paul to write about the error of allowing sin to go unchecked in the church...

Paul and received a report about the church that told him about a man i the church engaged in immorality with his step mother...

However, the Corinthian church had become so world that they had overlooked the sin and allowed the young man to continue in it and to continue in fellowship with them...

And here is what Paul writes in 1 Cor 5:1...

I am going to read this whole chapter but it is very important in a day when sin threatens to enter the church like it did in Corinth...

***1 It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife. 2 [a]You have become [b]arrogant and [c]have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst.***

***3 For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. 4 In***

*the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and [d]I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, 5 I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord [e]Jesus.*

*6 Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?*

*7 Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.*

*8 Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

*9 I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; 10 I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. 11 But [f]actually, I wrote to you not to associate [g]with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one. 12 For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? 13 But those who are outside, God [h]judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.*

We dont have time to address the whole chapter but let me give you a few truths dealing with sin in the church..

#1 - It calls for judgment.

Paul had heard about the immorality of the man and his stepmother...

And it disgusted that the church had not dealt with it..

And then he writes this in verse 3...

I have already judged him from where I write, which was 100s of miles away...

What Paul is saying is this...

I can see from here that what that man and woman are doing is wrong, so why haven't you removed them from the church?

And probably part of the reason is that they didn't want to be considered judgmental...

That should sound familiar because that is the same reason that some church today let sin go unchecked..

But you have to judge people, especially those who call themselves Christians...

And you have to address their sin because they claim to represent the Lord Jesus Christ...

And His name must be protected at all costs...

So #1, the church is called to judgment when it comes to sin in the church..

But #2 - dealing with it is for the benefit of the one caught in it..

In verse 5, the point of putting out the sinner is to move him to repentance and back into fellowship..

Paul writes, we judge him and remove him so that his soul may be saved...

The point is this...

Removing sin should motivate the sinner to reject his fleshly desires and return to the Lord in repentance...

#3 - The church deals with sin to keep more sin from entering..

Here is how it goes in the church.

If you don't address sin in the church, you are sending an invitation for more sin to enter...

A little leaven leavens the whole lump..

And the point is this...

What business do people of the light have to do with people who walk in darkness...

Sin needs to be dealt with in order to protect those who are trying to walk in holiness...

Now a reminder, this applies only to people who refuse to repent of their sin and make it a practice in their life and in the church...

Everyone in the church sins, but those who refuse to repent put themselves in another category all together...

That leads to chapter 6 where Paul addresses more immorality in the church where believers were suing other believers...

And turning to unbelievers to settle their dispute...

Paul says that is a lose-lose situation....

Not only are your disputes bad witnesses for the unity you should have in Christ...

You are turning to people who operate on worldly wisdom to settle lawsuits...

Instead, you should work out your disputes with each other and turn to other Christians and the church for help...

A saved person has more wisdom on settling disputes than the most intelligent lawyer because the saved person possesses the wisdom of God through His spirit..

That leads us to chapter 7 where God inspires Paul to write about...



### **III. Marriage in the Church (7)**

We don't have time to address all the things about marriage that Paul writes about, but offers God's word on the basics of what marriage is..

Like all corrupt cultures, Corinth was home to sexual immorality of the worst kind....

So Paul has to use the opening chapters to just address the basics of marriage...

One man for one woman...

He talks about the benefit of marriage to keep a person from other temptations...

He then addresses issues of divorce and provides the second biblical justification for divorce, which is abandonment, in verses 10-16...

HE then ends chapter 7 by addressing reasons to not marry if the Lord has willed that for someone...

The bottom line of this instruction in chapter 7 is this...

Paul affirms everything that God has said about marriage in his word...

He affirmed everything that Jesus taught about marriage in his ministry...

And he concludes this...

It is good to get married, but both single people and married can serve the Lord fully in each of their situations...

That leads to chapters 8-10, where we find instruction for the church on issues that may not be defined in Scripture...

This section is entitled....

#### **IV. Liberty in the Church (8-10)**

This is one of the most helpful section of all the NT in my opinion because the church abounds with plenty of opinions on what Christians should and shouldn't do...

Can you dance?

Can you play cards?

Can you drink alcohol?

What entertainment is appropriate for your family?

Can you get a tattoo?

Can a woman wear pants?

Can you work on Sundays?

All of these questions and 100s of others are what is often called gray areas of Scripture..

Some call these Christian liberties...

Or issues of the conscience...

Let me just share a little personal story with you and then I will make a comment on chapters 8-10...

I grew up in the south like many of you and my view of what Christians should and shouldn't do came from other Christians and not from the Bible..

In other words, when I got saved, I had some idea of what it meant to be a Christian not based on Scripture but based on what others told me Christians should and shouldn't do...

So for many years, I lived under the bondage of being governed by other people's opinions of what I should do...

Now, some of their expectations were based on what the Bible taught, but others weren't.

And as I grew in the Lord, I was surprised that so many things I was told were right and wrong for me to do were based on opinion and not the Word of God..

That put me in a difficult spot...

On one hand and always remember this...

It is never good to violate your conscience...

So even if you come to the point in your walk with the Lord that you realize your conscience is not based on the Bible...

Don't go whole hog in violating it just because you found out you can...

That is never good...

However on the other hand, make sure that your conscience moves to a point where it is informed by Scripture and not by what others think you should do...

But here is the bottom line with issues of liberty in the Christian life...

And this is a brief summary of what God explains so well through Paul in chapters 10-12...

But our Christian liberty should never be exercised if it causes another person to sin against their conscience...

Or if it damages our opportunity to share the gospel with someone else..

Your life on this earth is not meant for your entertainment or pleasure...

Your life as a believer on this earth is to share the gospel with others in hopes that God would use you to save them..

And anything that interferes with that mission being carried out should be avoided..

Our lives have been given to the cause of Christ...

Our lives and our enjoyment is not what we live...

We live to share Christ and we limit any freedom we may have in order to make the name of Christ great in the world...

That is a short summary of 1 Cor 10-12, but it will have to do for now...

Cause we need to get to the next section in in chapters 11-14 which deal with...

## **V. Worship in the Church (11-14)**

In chapters 11-14, Paul deals with specific questions about what goes on in the church...

In chapter 11, he addresses the role of women in the church...

Followed by instruction on how to observe the Lord's Supper in the church...

Then in chapters 12-14, Paul addresses the nature of spiritual gifts...

At salvation, every believer is blessed with a spiritual gift...

Paul lists some those gifts in chapter 12 and then talks about how all are worthless unless they are exercised in love in chapter 13...

Chapter 14 is then reserved for the instruction on specific spiritual gifts...

The Corinthian church was so influenced by the world that they began to brag on what gift they had and even used them to shame other believers who didn't have their gift...

Paul rebukes such behavior and talks about the need for the church to do all things in an orderly manner..

And that would exclude people from trying to show off their gift in the church...

The bottom line with instruction of exercising the gifts in church is this..

Use your spiritual gifts for the glory of God and the help of others, not to make a name for yourself..

And second, do not let confusion and disorder be present when you gather as a church to exercise your gifts and worship the Lord...

I would encourage you to look at chapters 12-14 on your own...

We may even take some time as a church to go through these chapters...

Much harm has been done and is still being done to the church based on incorrect interpretations and applications of these chapters..

Now, there is disagreement over how these verse are to be interpreted and because of that, you have all sorts of denominations that have sprung from different views of 1 Cor 12 - 14...



We don't have time to address all the areas of disagreement tonight, but it would be a worthwhile study in the future.

For now, I would simply say...

God cares for what happens in His church, and God cares for how He is worshipped.

In the OT, he spent multiple chapters teaching Israel the proper way to worship Him..

And if you think for a moment that God no longer cares how HE is worshipped, you would be dead wrong...

God still cares about how He is worshipped in the church, and He gave clear instructions to Paul on how it should happen..

That leads us to chapter 15, where Paul speaks on the importance of the resurrection of Christ...

## **VI. Resurrection and the Church (15)**

Many in the Corinthian church were doubting the resurrection of Christ...

The scientist of the day were causing people to be skeptical if Jesus was actually raised from the dead or if it was just a made up story...

That sends Paul into a rage..

And he reminds the church at Corinth that the resurrection is central to Christianity...

It is not optional for the Christian to deny the reality of the resurrection...

If you deny the resurrection, you might as well abandon Christianity.

Then at the end of chapter 15, Paul describes how the resurrection of Christ has a direct impact on every Christian...

Who now has the hope of being raised from the dead as well...

And in verses 50-57 describes the resurrection body that all Christians will one day receive...

The point of the verses is this...

Every human has a body they got from Adam...

It is tainted by sin in every way, and because of that, we are in the process of dying from the moment we are born...

We give names to death like cancer and heart disease or a car accident or a flood...

But the cause of death for everyone is sin...

Since our bodies have been corrupted by the sin of Adam and everyone who came from him...

And these bodies are not fit for eternity..

However when someone gets saved, they are promised to one day exchange this body of Adam for the body of Christ...

Which is a body that never sinned or saw corruption...

Therefore, it is a body fit for heaven and eternity with God..

Think about the driving test to get your license..

You don't take the big RV to your driver's test; it won't fit in the parallel parking barriers..

You pick the little compact car..

in the same way, your sinful body can't go to heaven and into the presence of God...

You need a body that will fit into heaven, and that will be the resurrection body described in chapter 15...

That leaves us one chapter, which is 16...

This is often described as...

## **VII. Charge to the Church (16)**

In these final verses of this letter, Paul tells the Corinthian church to be collecting money to be distributed to needy believers in Jerusalem.

He then wants the Corinthian church to know that he will come to see them when the Lord permits him to come...

And then Paul's final instruction to the church in this first letter is found in 16:13-14...

***13 Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. 14 Let all that you do be done in love.***

That is some good instruction for any church...

#1 - Be on the alert and the thought is to be aware of false teachers and their false teaching because they are energized by evil and ready to enter any church at any time...

#2 - Stand firm is the thought of holding fast to the faith that saved them and not moving away from it.

#3- Act like men is instruction to grow in maturity and not be living on milk but eating solid biblical food.

#4 - Be strong is a call to courage to speak truth in a culture of lies and liars...

#5 - Do everything in love is a call to let love be the motivation of your heart in all you do...

If that is airing the gospel with the lost, let love drive you to do that...

If that is removing an unrepentant church member from the church, let your love of the holiness of God and your love of the person caught in sin be the driving force of what you do...

If that is exercising a spiritual gift, do it out of love and not pride.

Love is the underlying motivation of all the actions we take...

## **Conclusion**

And that concludes all of what God inspired Paul to write to the Corinthian church in this first letter to them...

I entitled it, Church Rules because that is what it is.

As God has established the church, He cares about what goes on in the church..

My French teacher in high school was names Mrs. Snow...

And since teachers were required to cover class rules on the first day, it was usually a wasted day...

But not Mrs. Snow...

She would always say this...

“I have only made one rule for my classroom, so that we can start learning French right away..

And the rule for my class is this...

“You cannot do anything that interferes with the education or shows disrespect for any person in this classroom.”

And though, we tried to think of things we could do to get around that one rule, it was nearly impossible...

Let me sum up the rules for church behavior...

“You cannot do anything as a member of the church that takes away from the glory of God and His mission in this world.”

Let us pray.