

CORINTHIANS – THE MORE EXCELLENT WAY

STUDY 7

Idolatry & immorality – inevitable fruit of insanity

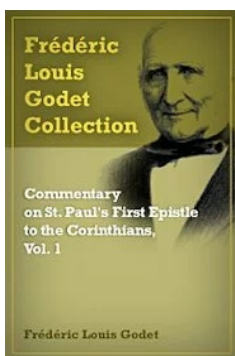
For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions ... ROMANS 1:25,26

7a: The Awesome Station of Saints (6:1-8)

6:1-3 In 'daring' to go before secular courts with disputes between brethren, what did the Corinthians reveal as to their priorities?

[v.1] ... it will be seen that most of the converts had been rescued from appalling moral and social conditions, and the influence of these things does not leave one at the time of conversion. The spirit of dissension, uncleanness, the neglect of moral discipline, quarrelsomeness, unseemliness, irreverence, and self-assertiveness are all reflected in this letter. [Scroggie 68]

Christians receive the title of honour ... *the saints*. They are a people whom a Divine consecration has profoundly separated from the unjust and sinful world, and who ought therefore to possess within them the standard of justice. Had not Daniel seen the judgment given to *the saints* of the Most High? (vii.22) ... By the formula, *do ye not know*, which occurs no less than ten times in our Epistle, the apostle alludes to the doctrines he had delivered to the Church at the time of its foundation. Here it applies to a very special point of Christian eschatology, and from the example it may be concluded how detailed was the instruction which the Churches received from the apostle. [Godet 285-86]



6:4-8 In what respects was this attitude SHAME for the Corinthians? (Heb.5:11-14)

“Do you not know?”

7b: The Awesome Responsibility of Saints (6:9-20)

6:9-11 By what distortions of grace were the Corinthians deceived?

[v.9] This part of the list gives prominence to those who sin against themselves by practising sexual vice. The inclusion of *idolaters* may point to the immorality of much heathen worship of the day. [Morris 97]

[v.10] It is noteworthy how regularly greed (covetousness, Gk *pleonexia*) figures in such lists of vices; it may indicate desire for what one should not have (as in the Tenth Commandment) or inordinate desire for what is lawful in itself, to the point where it becomes a form of idolatry (cf. Eph.5.5; Col.3.5). [Bruce 61]

6:12-13,20 Though the saints may be free from condemnation, from what are they evidently NOT free? (Rom. 8:1-17, esp. vv.2,15)

[v.12] He first lays down the principle of Christian liberty, *all things are lawful unto me* (repeated in x.23). The way he introduces this makes it seem as though the Corinthians had used the maxim to justify their conduct. [Morris 99]

6:14-20 How has Greek philosophy's denigration of the body led to unhealthy emphases in the church?

[v.14] The resurrection dominated early Christian thinking, as we see from the early chapters of the Acts, and, indeed, from the whole New Testament. That the Father raised the Son from the dead, and did not simply cause His soul to persist through bodily dissolution, indicates something of the dignity of the body. [Morris 100]

[v.20] Do not live therefore as though your great business in life was the gratifying of your appetite. Let there be something higher before you. As Christians your business is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. [Ironsides 193]

**Cults,
frogs
and
*gnosis***

7c: For Whom Shall Freedom Be Used? (8:1-13)

8:1-3 How, apparently, were some believers abusing their superior 'knowledge' (*gnosis*, Gk)?

8:4-8 How did the Corinthians, like the cults today, lose sight of the divine purpose of knowledge? (Matt.24:48,49)

[8:2] Knowledge puffeth up -- love buildeth up. Some of us get to be like a great swollen frog on a log, just puffed out with wind. We imagine that we have advanced wonderfully over other folk. Throw a stone at the frog and he suddenly shrinks to about one-fifth of the size he seemed to be ... We need to "grow in grace and in the

“Knowledge puffs up, love builds up”

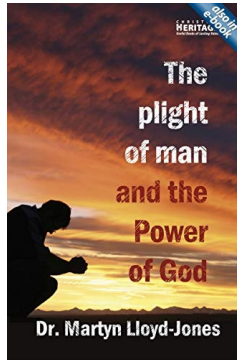
knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ,” and if we put knowledge before grace, it will work harm to ourselves as well as to others. [Ironsides 236]

8:9-13 How did Paul set an example in his use of Christian liberty? (Acts 16:1-3; 21:17-26)

[8:9] The requirement that the strong have a care for the weak becomes explicit. *Liberty* is *exousia*, which means ‘authority’, or ‘right’. The Corinthians claimed the ‘right’ to do as they pleased in the matter of idols. Paul reminds them that no Christian is at liberty to assert his ‘rights’ if that means doing harm to other people, a principle of wide application. [Morris 128]

Christianity is theocentric – are we ?

God is to be worshipped because He is God, because He is the Creator, because He is the Almighty, because He is the “high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity,” because His Name is Holy. And in His presence it is impossible to think of anything else. All thoughts of self and of benefits that may accrue, all ideas concerning the possible results and advantages to ourselves, or to our class or country, are banished. He is supreme and He is alone. To place anything before God is to deny Him, however noble and exalted that thing may be. The results and blessings of salvation, the moral life and the improved society -- all these things are the consequences of true belief and they must never be allowed to usurp the supreme position. Indeed, as I have said, if we truly worship God and realize His presence, they cannot do so. **D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones** *The Plight of Man and the Power of God* p.31



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