

# Marks of (Im)maturity

1 Corinthians 1 – 6



Apostle Paul (~ 5 – 67 A.D.)  
By Andrei Rublev (1410)

Marks of (Im)maturity Introduction

# Marks of (Im)maturity Introduction

- When Jesus prayed for his disciples he made some important points relevant to today's message.
  1. We are not of the world.
  2. Nonetheless, we are sent into the world.
  3. We have a great need to be sanctified (made holy).

# Marks of (Im)maturity Introduction

- **John 17:14-19** (ESV)

<sup>14</sup> I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. <sup>15</sup> I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. <sup>17</sup> Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. <sup>18</sup> As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup> And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

# Marks of (Im)maturity Introduction

- One of the biggest struggles any church has is to differentiate itself from the world while remaining in it.
- Some groups have tried to escape the world.
- Others have compromised with it.
- The Corinthian church was of the compromising variety.

# Marks of (Im)maturity    Introduction

1. Congregational In-groups    1 Cor 1 & 3
2. Sexual Freedom    1 Cor 5 & 6
3. Interpersonal Disputes    1 Cor 6

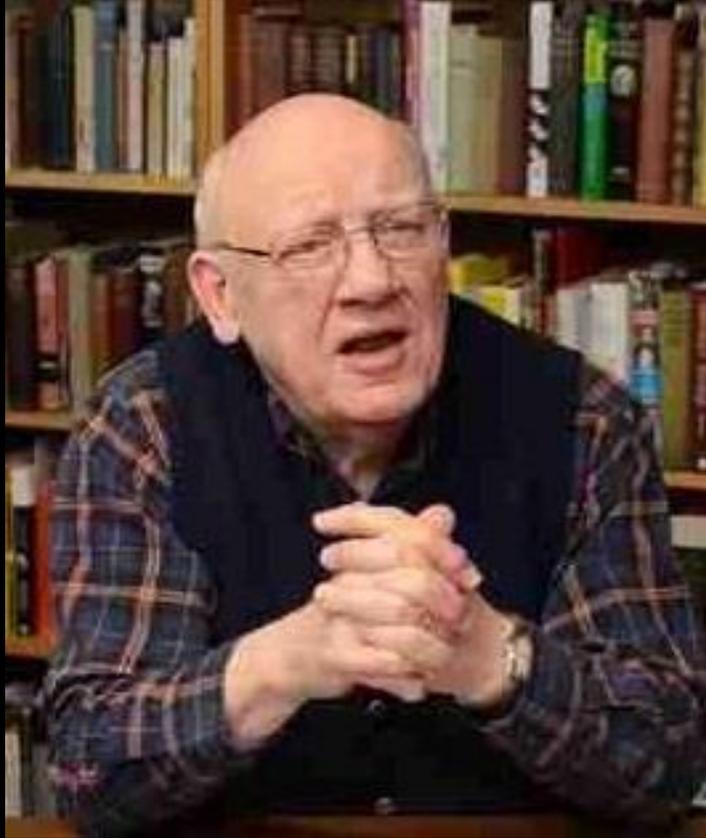
# 1. Congregational In-groups 1 Cor 1 & 3

- Read 1:10-13 and 3:1-9

# 1. Congregational In-groups 1 Cor 1 & 3

- Paul, Apollos and Cephas (Peter) were all on the same team.
- They were not causing the divisions.
- It was the Corinthians' own immaturity.

# 1. Congregational In-groups 1 Cor 1 & 3



*Human nature enjoys following human leaders. We tend to identify more with spiritual leaders who help us and whose ministry we understand and enjoy. Instead of emphasizing the message of the Word, the Corinthians emphasized the messenger. They got their eyes off the Lord and on the Lord's servants, and this led to competition.*

*– Warren Wiersbe*

# 1. Congregational In-groups 1 Cor 1 & 3

- It is fine to have a preference for a certain person's ministry.
- The problem is not appreciating the preferences of others.
- The Corinthians took minor differences, made them major issues, and formed factions based on those distinctions.

# 1. Congregational In-groups 1 Cor 1 & 3

- At the root of all of the problems in Corinth was immaturity.
- Getting older is not the same as growing more mature.
- Age is only one factor – but more important is commitment to personal growth

# 1. Congregational In-groups 1 Cor 1 & 3

## Hebrews 5:11-13 (ESV)

<sup>11</sup> About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. <sup>12</sup> For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, <sup>13</sup> for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child.

## 2. Sexual Freedom    1 Cor 5 & 6

- Read 5:1-12 and 6:15-20

## 2. Sexual Freedom    1 Cor 5 & 6

- Keep in mind that Corinth was mainly a seaport.
- It had a reputation in the ancient world for wild living.
- In Corinth, the Jews were well outside the mainstream.
- Their God and their Bible were unfamiliar to the average person – as were biblical standards of behavior.

## 2. Sexual Freedom    1 Cor 5 & 6

- Plato used the expression “**Corinthian girl**” to refer to a prostitute (*Republic 404d*).
- One Greek playwright wrote about a vulgar person and entitled the play *The Corinthian*.
- Another coined the verb “**to Corinthianize**” to refer to immoral behavior.

## 2. Sexual Freedom    1 Cor 5 & 6

- Corinth had a well-deserved reputation for being immoral even by pagan standards.
- In that climate, we can easily imagine that nearly everyone in town would have been tainted.
- These were now the people who had now become part of the church.

## 2. Sexual Freedom    1 Cor 5 & 6

- **5:1** Paul has to deal with an especially unpleasant problem in the Corinthian church.
- He points out that even the Greeks would have found this relationship unsavory – not so the ancient Canaanites.

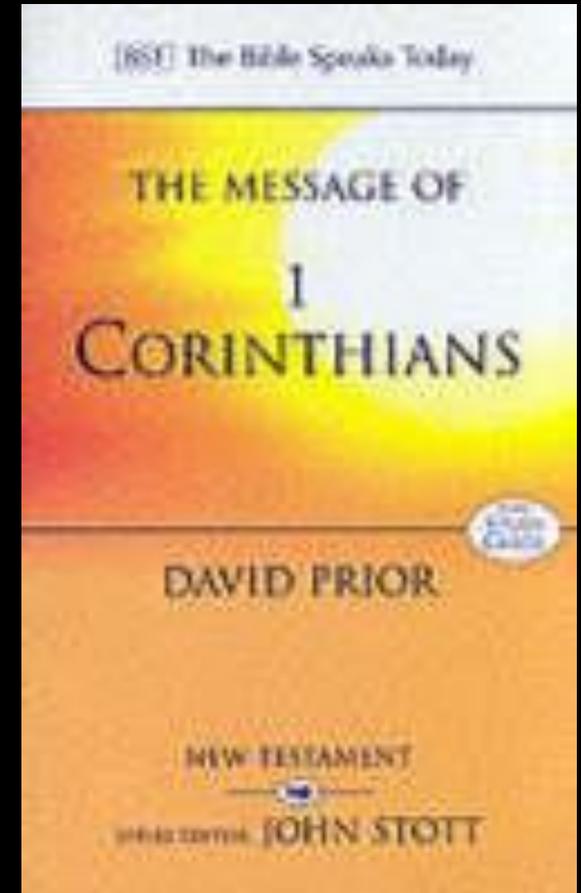
## 2. Sexual Freedom    1 Cor 5 & 6

- **5:1**    Such relations were explicitly prohibited in **Leviticus 18**, but the Corinthian church may not have known that just yet.
- The larger principle, however, is found in the word translated “sexual immorality.”
- The Greek word is *porneia*, literally “resorting to prostitutes.”

## 2. Sexual Freedom 1 Cor 5 & 6

*The word came to mean, by consistent New Testament usage, any sexual behaviour which transgresses the Christian norm, i.e. all premarital, extramarital and unnatural sexual intercourse. The word is used in a comprehensive sense.*

– David Prior, former director,  
The Centre for Marketplace Theology,  
London.



## 2. Sexual Freedom    1 Cor 5 & 6

- The biblical standard can be summed up by the phrases “**One man, one woman, one lifetime.**”
- This is the title of a 1995 book by the Canadian Rabbi Reuven P. Bulka, subtitled *An Argument for Moral Tradition*.

## 2. Sexual Freedom    1 Cor 5 & 6

- In our day an important consideration is this:
- The Bible does not limit the human rights of sexual beings; rather, it limits the sexual entitlement of human beings.
- (Cf. Amnesty International's policy on sex workers' rights.)

## 2. Sexual Freedom 1 Cor 5 & 6



*Whatever is permitted, is permitted within certain guidelines ... Regarding sexual pleasure ... Sexual relations are reserved for husband and wife ... These guidelines are ennobling guidelines designed to sanctify the sexual encounter.*

– Rabbi Reuven P. Bulka

## 3. Interpersonal Disputes 1 Cor 6

- Now let's read 6:1-8.

### 3. Interpersonal Disputes 1 Cor 6

- Paul's issue is not that there is a conflict.
- Conflicts between people are inevitable.
- Paul's issue is their inability to resolve it without resorting to a legal battle.

### 3. Interpersonal Disputes 1 Cor 6

- Legal battles can be long and expensive.
- Further, the system does always not lend itself to a satisfying outcome or reconciliation between the two sides.

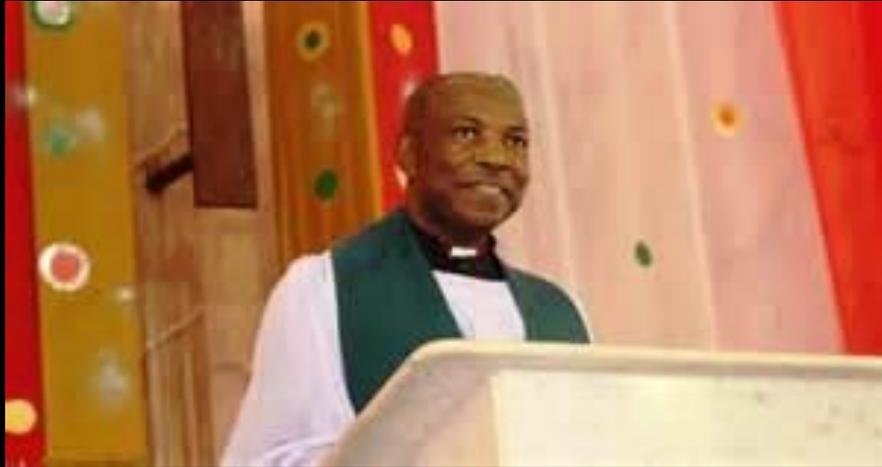
### 3. Interpersonal Disputes 1 Cor 6



*The Greeks often had lawsuits against each other, and this habit had been brought into the church. Paul felt very strongly that Christians should not be asking ungodly people to judge their legal disputes (6:1) ...*

*– Dachollom Datiri, President,  
Church of Christ in Nations*

### 3. Interpersonal Disputes 1 Cor 6



*Christians should value their common relationship with God in their dealings with one another.*

*– Dachollom Datiri, President,  
Church of Christ in Nations*

### 3. Interpersonal Disputes 1 Cor 6

- In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus encouraged out-of-court settlements when possible.
- **Matthew 5:25-27** (ESV)

<sup>25</sup> Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. <sup>26</sup> Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

### 3. Interpersonal Disputes 1 Cor 6

- Interpersonal disputes can involve more than the kind of battles we take to court.
- All parties must be willing to live with the result.
- Consider Paul and Barnabas and their dispute over whether Mark should accompany them on a later journey.

### 3. Interpersonal Disputes 1 Cor 6

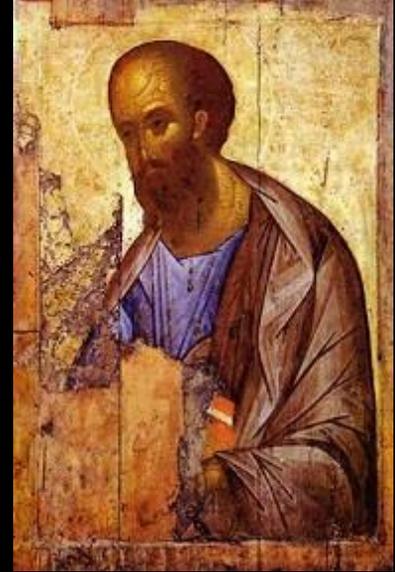
#### Acts 15:39-41 (ESV)

<sup>39</sup> And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, <sup>40</sup> but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. <sup>41</sup> And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

### 3. Interpersonal Disputes 1 Cor 6

- There was no legal issue, nor any disagreement between them regarding Christian doctrine or practice.
- Thus, it is hard to say whether one side was right or wrong.
- Both Paul and Barnabas continued to serve, Mark and Silas each had a strong mentor, and the ministry multiplied.

# Marks of *Maturity* Conclusions



# Marks of *Maturity* Conclusions

- Till Jesus comes, a few things will always remain true about the church and its place in the world.
  1. We are not of the world.
  2. Nonetheless, we are sent into the world.
  3. We have a great need to be sanctified (made holy).

# Marks of *Maturity* Conclusions

- The three issues we looked at are as relevant today as they were to the church in Corinth.
  1. Congregational In-groups
  2. Sexual Freedom
  3. Interpersonal Disputes

# Marks of *Maturity* Conclusions

- When it comes to **1. Congregational In-groups**, there is no better advice than that of the great sage **Anonymous**.

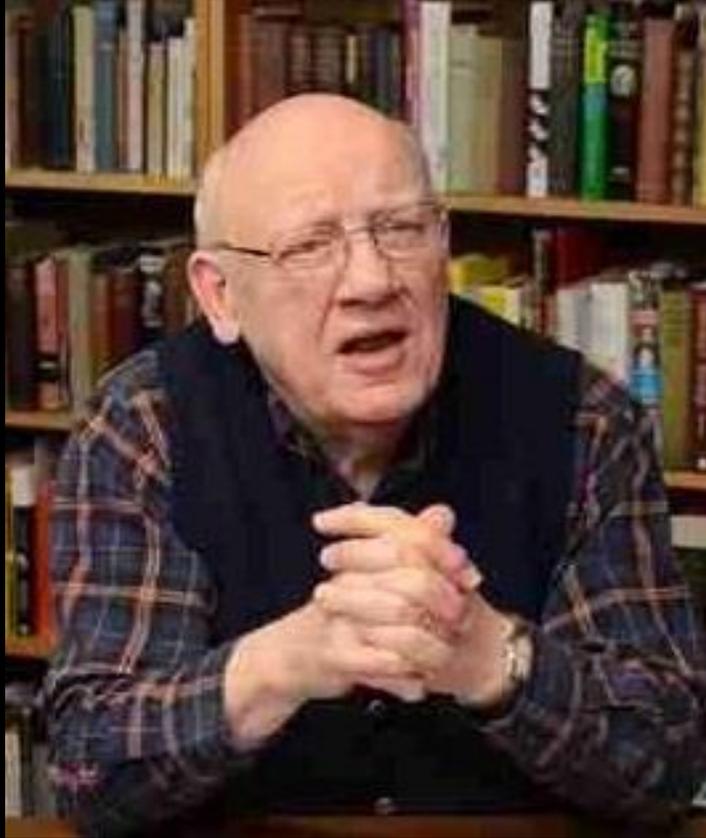
*In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty,  
in all things charity.*

(You will find this attributed to various authors without a supporting reference in their writings.)

# Marks of *Maturity* Conclusions

- In the cases of 2. *Sexual Freedom*, and 3. *Interpersonal Disputes*, it may be that there are problems that need to be addressed.
- In each case these should be handled as privately as possible and with a goal of restoration.

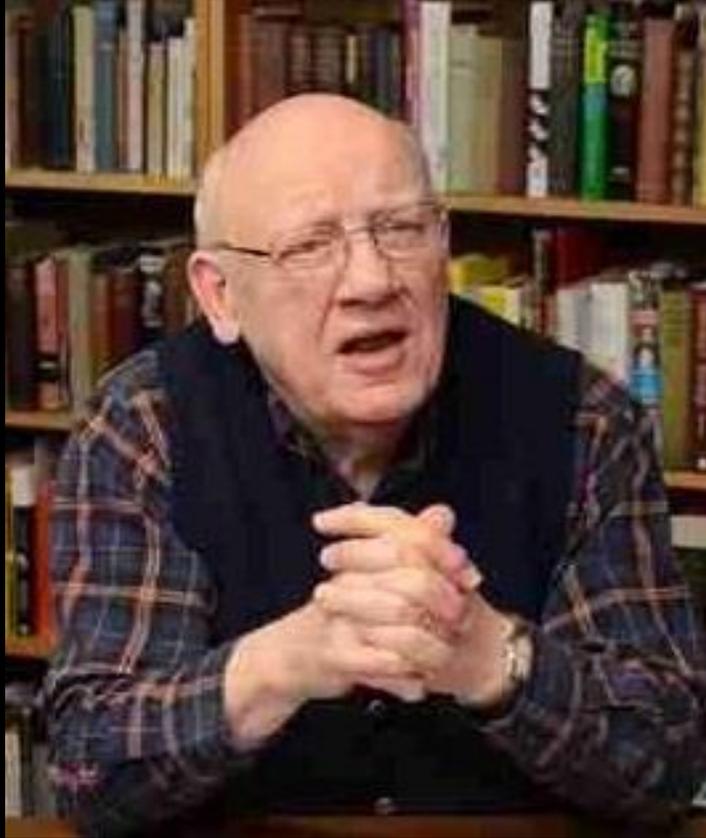
# 1. Congregational Disunity 1 Cor 1 & 3



*No church is perfect, but human imperfection must never be an excuse for sin. Just as parents must discipline their children in love, so local churches must exercise discipline over the members of the assembly ...*

*– Warren Wiersbe*

# 1. Congregational Disunity 1 Cor 1 & 3



*Church discipline is not a group of “pious policemen” out to catch a criminal. Rather, it is a group of brokenhearted brothers and sisters seeking to restore an erring member of the family.*

*– Warren Wiersbe*

# Marks of *Maturity* Conclusions

- Finally, we need to be very aware that neither the world, nor our old life can provide the standard for Christian living.
- That comes from God; his word has the final say.
- He sets the bar high, but then empowers us to reach it.

# Marks of *Maturity* Conclusions

- **1 Corinthians 6:9-11** (ESV)

<sup>9</sup> Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, <sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

<sup>11</sup> And such were some of you. 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.