

Wronged for Jesus's Sake 1 Corinthians 6:1-11

Intro: Paul has already addressed personality divisions and sexual immorality in the Corinthian church. In this chapter he speaks to lawsuits between Christians. In a suit-happy world, such as ours, the Corinthians believers are following their non-Christian counterparts into the courts to sue one another. The behavior emanates from a lack of understanding about the nature of the church and its mission in the world. It also fails to look back to its founding in a cross.

But what do lawsuits between Christians and Jesus's cross have to do with one another?

First: What Paul is Not Saying

1 - Paul is not undermining the place of the court system. He appealed to the Roman courts for his rights in Acts 22 & 25.

God is sovereign but mediates his will through human institutions.

1 Peter 2:13 - *Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution*

"institution" = *anthropinektisei* = *ktisei/created & anthropine/for mankind*

God ordained five institutions:

- a) Marriage (Gen 1:27-28, ; 1 Peter 3:1-5; Eph 5:22-23, 28-33) –
 - Procreation – Gen 1:27-28
 - Personification – Eph 5:24-27
 - Partnership – Gen 2:18
 - Pleasure – Prov 5:18-19
- b) Family – (Eph 6:1-4; Col 3:20; Hb 12:5-11) – to catechize
 - To teach obedience and submission – Eph 6:1-4/Col 3:20
 - To catechize – Hb 12:5-11
 - To raise a godly heritage – Eph 6:4; orv 22:6; Deut 4:9
 - To be a blessing – Prov 17:6, 31:28
- c) Government
 - To moralize - (Gen 9:6; Ro 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-14; Titus 3:1-2)

The God-ordained purpose of the state is to quell evil in a fallen world through corporeal punishment.

- d) Commerce – (1 Pet 2:18-21; Eph 6:5; Col 3:22) – to economize

The institution of commerce serves to create prosperity, sustenance and temporal provisions for the needs of humanity

e) Church – (Hb 13:17; 1 Thess 5:12-13; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-5)

- To represent – Eph 5:25-31; 1 Tim 3:15
- To guard the truth – Acts 20:28
- To witness the existence and character of God – 1 Peter 5:1-5
- To evangelize – Matt 28:18-20

2 – Nor is he implying that the church should have its own court system. For instance, Romans 13:3-4 reminds us that the state is ordained by God to handle criminal cases.

We cannot expect the church to arrest thieves on the street any more than we can expect the state to make disciples in the church.

But this is a matter of brothers suing brothers. So what does Paul say?

Second: Don't sue another Christian v 1

- a) It is important for Christians to settle disputes among themselves according to God's principles.
- b) This can be done either through the church, or through Christian arbitration.

But today, even as in Paul's day, there is no reason for Christians to sue one another and Paul is about to tell us why.

Third: Saints will judge the world v 2

We don't know everything we want to know about this because this is not the point of the passage.

Revelation 2:25-27 - The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, ²⁷ and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father.

Fourth: You will judge angels v 3

Again, we don't know everything we want to know about this concept either, but again, it is because this is not the point of the passage.

What we do know is that....

We have a higher position than angels

- We are created in God's image – Gen 1:27
- We are redeemed by Christ – Eph 1:7
- Angels serve us – Hb 1:14
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Jesus has been exalted above all the angels (see Ephesians 1:20-23), and it seems reasonable that those who are in Him and made in His likeness (Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 15:49; Ephesians 4:24; 1 John 3:2) will share in His authority, including His authority over the angels (Matthew 19:28; 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 20:4)

The point: *Eschatology is ethical*. If this is true – that we will judge angels – how should we now live? The Corinthians are not living in the light of their eternal position

III – Grandchildren – “Kings and queens of a world to come.” Live like it now.

Fifth: The church is a world unto itself v 4

1 Corinthians 1:30 - *And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,*

- a) If Christ is our wisdom, then we must behave as Jesus
- b) If Christ is our righteousness, then we must rest in his approval/knowledge
- c) If Christ is our sanctification, then following him is our course of action
- d) If Christ is our redemption, then we don't need others to justify us

Gospel: This is what is so hard about Christianity for nonChristians. We naturally want to justify ourselves, to go our own way and to seek approval/identity from inconsistent sources. I can understand the dilemma. But self-justification is never ending. You are grounding your identity in quicksand if not in what God has done in the cross. You are shadow-boxing and beating up yourself.

Sixth: Wisdom can do this v 5-6

The Corinthians claimed to be wise (1 Cor 1:18-31) but Paul has already chided them for not being so. This is another instance of Paul reminding them that they are not wise.

Seventh: Suing fellow Christians defeats the church's witness and purpose v 7a

- a) The church represents a reconciling God
- b) The church represents a forgiving God

For Christians not to forgive each other and reconcile their own differences is to demonstrate spiritual defeat. No matter what a court decides, if you sue a fellow Christian, you have lost more than you have gained.

Chapter five last week defined sin as theft, theft from ourselves. In that same vein, winning a court case against a fellow Christian is a loss for your testimony and sanctification.

Eighth: Christians should be willing to suffer wrong 7b

Paul is greatly concerned with the testimony of the church in Corinth. If we believe that

- a) God is sovereign,
- b) that He works all things together for our good, and
- c) that no one gets away with sin,

then it is far better for us to be taken advantage of by another believer than to take a brother/sister to court.

Paul didn't say, "*Suffer wrong instead of confronting the problem.*" Wrong must be confronted.

But if you don't 'win' the confrontation, you must suffer wrong rather than do wrong (take a brother to court).

Ninth: Suing another Christian wrongs and defrauds the church 8

Christians suing Christians harms all of us. It brings disrepute on the whole church body.

There is no place for wrongdoing *by* Christians and there is no place for wrongdoing *among* Christians.

Paul isn't denying anyone's faith. He's simply saying that faith is not separate from actions.

We do what we are.

Tenth: Suing a fellow Christian is in a long list of other sins 9-10

Someone might say. *"Sure, what I'm doing is wrong, but it's not that wrong."*

- 1 – Yes, it is.
- 2 - Don't categorize sin.
- 3 – The temporal ramifications of sin are different, (stealing a pencil vs murder) but sin isn't.
- 4 - All sin ends in death (James 1:5).

The good news is that Jesus saves us from our sins (Matt 1:21).

The only thing you gain by mistreating a brother is the loss of your testimony and perhaps, the loss of your own soul.

Eleventh: You are not that person 11

- a) You were washed (Titus 3:5; Acts 22:16; Rev 1:5; Eph 5:26)
- b) You were sanctified (Hb 10:10; John 17:19; Acts 26:18; Ro 15:16)
- c) You were justified (Ro 3:24, 28; 5:1)
- d) In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ
- e) By the Spirit of our God

The cross is the dividing line between your old life and your new life.

God takes the people in vs 9-10 and makes them the people in v 11. But we have the responsibility to live that life.

Ephesians 4:20-24 - *But that is not the way you learned Christ!— ²¹ assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²² to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*

There is nothing magical about this. It is supernatural but that doesn't mean it isn't hard work.

Twelfth: Application

It is providential that we are discussing this passage on Psalm Sunday.

- Jesus entered the city as a hero and left it as a criminal.
- He was in the right and everyone else was in the wrong.
- Since the Fall, we are all in the wrong. None of us are right (Ro 3:10, 23).
- And the crucifixion of Jesus is the greatest wrong.

And yet, Jesus did not appeal to an earthly or Heavenly court to right this wrong.

- a) When the Romans came to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and Peter drew a sword to defend him, Jesus responded,

“Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matt 26:53).

- b) And when he stood before Pilate who threatened him, Jesus said,

“You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above.” (John 19:11).

The key is John 18:36 – *“My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.”*

So what’s your kingdom? Is this world all you have, and you have told hold onto it at the expense of eternity?

Is this world fighting for at the expense of your shalom and testimony?

Luke 9:23-25 - *“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. ²⁵ For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?”*

What if I win my lawsuit and lose myself?

The questions are: *“Will we follow Christ? Will we trust God?”*

Community Groups:

- 1 – Read the text
- 2 – What situation is Paul addressing in this passage?
- 3 – What is Paul not saying in this passage/
- 4 – What reasons does Paul give for why we should not sue each other?
- 5 – What does it mean that we will judge the world?
- 6 – What does it mean that we will judge angels?
- 7 – How should these two thoughts change our behavior?
- 8 – How do these two thoughts change the way the church behaves in the world?
- 9 – How does a Christian suing a Christian harm the church’s testimony?
- 10 – Why should Christians be willing to suffer wrong?
- 11 – How did Jesus react when he was falsely charged?

12 – What model does he offer us in Luke 9:23-25?

13 – What practical applications for my daily life can I glean from this text?