

INTRODUCTION

1. We are returning to our study of 1 Corinthians this morning.
2. Let me invite you to take your Bibles and turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 6.
3. In chapter 5, Paul addressed the sexual immorality in the church and rebukes them for not doing anything about it.
4. Now in chapter 6 he addresses another problem: lawsuits.
5. Read 1 Corinthians 6:1-8

6. In chapter 1, verse 10 Paul said there were divisions that marked the Corinthian church.
7. It stemmed from elevating leaders far above what they should have.
8. The church was marked by pride, jealousy, and contention.
9. And now we're seeing another problem that it created in the church.

LESSON

In verse 1 we see...

I. The Shock Stated (v.1a)

- A. By the use of the word “Does” (NASB) or “Dare” as it appears in the KJV
- B. This is the Greek word Tolmao and it refers to showing boldness
- C. It is used 2 times in verse 1: the first time, as I just noted, it is translated “does” and the second it is translated “dare”
- D. The word is emphatic (i.e., it appears at the beginning of the verse)
- E. The reason why it is emphatic is to explain the shock Paul had with such behavior
- F. Paul always shocked and grieved by this kind of behavior because it was a normal occurrence taking place as noted by the use

of this present tense verb

- G. Albert Barnes says Paul was shocked and grieved by this behavior because “it was inconsistent with religion, and improper.”¹
- H. Bengel says, ‘by this grand word “Dare” does the apostle mark the injured majesty of the Christian name,’ thus caused.²
- I. The word “does not express the boldness of the act involved but the lack of shame thus shown.”³
- J. Just as they lacked shame in chapter 5 (v.2) over the immorality in the church, so they lacked it here.

¹ Barnes, Albert. Notes on the New Testament: I Corinthians. Ed. Robert Frew. London: Blackie & Son, 1884–1885. Print.

² Schaff, Philip, ed. The Epistles of St. Paul. Vol. 3. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1882. Print. 4 vols. A Popular Commentary on the New Testament.

³ Lenski, R. C. H. The Interpretation of St. Paul’s First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963. Print.

K. And to act in such a way, “insults God and the church.”⁴

L. In essence, Paul was saying, “How dare you!!”

Notice the rest of what Paul says in verse 1 as we see...

II. The Problem Given (vv.1b-4)

He says in verse 1, “Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor dare to go to law before the unrighteous and not before the saints?”

A. In other words, some Christians in Corinth [were] taking fellow believers to court

⁴ Barrett, C. K. The First Epistle to the Corinthians. London: Continuum, 1968. Print. Black’s New Testament Commentary.

before pagan judges to settle petty matters.

5

- B. Paul used a common Greek phrase to refer to lawsuits in verse 1: It's the phrase, "a case against his neighbor."
- C. He also used other phrases and words as well like "go to law" (vv.1,6), "law courts" (vv.2,4), "judges" (v.4), "law suits" (v.7)
- D. It is interesting to note they would judge others on petty matters but the weightier matters like the immorality in chapter 5, they did nothing about.
- E. There are two problems stated in verse 1:
 - 1. They were doing this to other believers

He said, "Does anyone of you, when he

⁵ Willmington, H. L. The Outline Bible. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999. Print.

has a case against his neighbor.”

a) The word “neighbor” is the Greek word *eteros* and it simply refers to “another” but in verse 5 he refers to them as “brethren.” In verse 6 he calls them “brother[s]” when he says, “But brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers.”

b) So brothers or Christians were suing other Christians

2. The second problem was they were doing this in the secular law courts

a) Paul says in verse 1 it was before the “unrighteous”

- b) He's not talking about their morality but their unsaved spirituality
- c) He calls them "unbelievers" in verse 6.
- d) Also in verse 1 he uses the phrase "go to law" which translates the Greek word krino which is translated "judge" in verse 2
- e) Verse 8 indicates that the kind of judging they were doing before unbelievers in the secular court was sin. He says "you yourselves wrong and defraud."
- f) So instead of taking their matters before the "saints" or the church, they were taking them before

unbelievers.

- g) Paul says these “judges” are of “no account in the church” (v.4)
- h) John MacArthur makes an important point when he says, “Paul’s concern was not that believers would get an unfair hearing in the public courts. They may have been given as fair judgments there as they would have received from fellow Christians. Paul was concerned because they had so little respect for the church’s authority and ability to settle its own disputes. Christians are members of Christ’s own Body and are indwelt by His own Spirit. Christians are saints, the holy ones of God, who are “enriched in Him” and “not

lacking in any gift” (1:2–7). “How,” Paul asks, “can you think of taking your problems outside of the family to be settled?” All the resources of truth, wisdom, equity, justice, love, kindness, generosity, and understanding reside in the people of God.

Christians are not to take other Christians to worldly courts.

When we put ourselves under the authority of the world in this way, we confess that we do not have right actions and right attitudes.

Believers who go to court with believers are more concerned with revenge or gain than with the unity

of the Body and the glory of Jesus Christ.

Disputes between Christians should be settled by and among Christians.

If we as Christians, with our wonderful gifts and resources in Christ, cannot settle a dispute, how can we expect unbelievers to do it?”

6

- i) The legal situation in Corinth probably was much as it was in Athens, where litigation was a part of everyday life. It had become a form of challenge and even entertainment.

⁶ MacArthur, John F., Jr. 1 Corinthians. Chicago: Moody Press, 1984. Print. MacArthur New Testament Commentary.

- j) One ancient writer claimed that, in a manner of speaking, every Athenian was a lawyer.
- k) When a problem arose between two parties that they could not settle between themselves, the first recourse was private arbitration.
- l) Each party was assigned a disinterested private citizen as an arbitrator, and the two arbitrators, along with a neutral third person, would attempt to resolve the problem.
- m) If they failed, the case was turned over to a court of forty, who assigned a public arbitrator to each

party.

- n) Interestingly, every citizen had to serve as a public arbitrator during the sixtieth year of his life.
- o) If public arbitration failed, the case went to a jury court, composed of from several hundred to several thousand jurors.
- p) Every citizen over thirty years of age was subject to serving as a juror. Either as a party to a lawsuit, as an arbitrator, or as a juror, most citizens regularly were involved in legal proceedings of one sort or another.
- q) The Corinthian believers had been so used to arguing, disputing, and

taking one another to court before they were saved that they carried those selfish attitudes and habits over into their new lives as Christians. That course not only was spiritually wrong but practically unnecessary.

- r) For centuries Jews had settled all their disputes either privately or in a synagogue court.
- s) They refused to take their problems before a pagan court, believing that to do so would imply that God, through His own people using His own scriptural principles, was not competent to solve every problem.
- t) It was considered a form of blasphemy to go to court before

Gentiles.

- u) Both Greek and Roman rulers had allowed the Jews to continue that practice, even outside Palestine.
- v) Under Roman law Jews could try virtually every offense and give almost any sentence, except that of death.
- w) As we know from Jesus' trial, the Sanhedrin was free to imprison and beat Jesus as they pleased, but they required the permission of Rome, represented by Pilate, in order to put Him to death.⁷

F. How are believers to handle matters with one another? Or more specifically “a case

⁷ MacArthur, John F., Jr. 1 Corinthians. Chicago: Moody Press, 1984. Print. MacArthur New Testament Commentary.

AGAINST” one another?

1. Matthew 18:15-17 gives the answer
2. Believers are to settle all issues between themselves within the church.⁸
3. Ultimately we are to “forgive one another” as Colossians 3:13 (NASB) says, “bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.”

So Paul is shocked and grieved by how they were settling their disputes.

In verses 2-3 we see...

⁸ MacArthur, John, Jr., ed. The MacArthur Study Bible. electronic ed. Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997. Print.

III. The Future Noted (vv.2-3)

By 3 questions...

The first question is in verse 2:

A. “Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world?” (v.2)

1. “Or do you not know” is the Greek word oida which means “to know, to understand, to recognize,”⁹ “to have knowledge of”¹⁰
2. Paul uses this word in 1 Corinthians 11:3 where it is translated “understand”
3. The phrase 10 occurs times in 1 Corinthians (6:3,9,15,16,19; 3:16; 5:6;

⁹ BDAG

¹⁰ Lou-Nida

9:13,24)

4. It's used in the perfect tense to indicate an action completed in the past but was having present results. That would imply previous knowledge.
5. The word "judge" is krino and it means to hear and be a judge in a legal case, therefore to "govern" or "rule"
6. The saints will judge the world

Jesus said in Matthew 19:28 (NASB) And Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the

twelve tribes of Israel.

Paul now asks his second question:

B. “Are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts?”

1. The word “constitute” is the Greek word *anaxios*, which means, “unworthy”
2. The HCSB translates it: are you unworthy to judge the smallest cases?
3. If you’re going to have in the future the responsibility of passing judgement on the world then why can’t you settle matters before the church and not before unbelievers?

Paul asks his third question...

C. “Do you not know that we will judge angels?”

1. He uses the same phrase in verse 2, “Do you not know?”
2. The saints will judge angels (v.3)
3. He reiterates his point again but this time mentions the angels
4. Since the Lord Himself will judge fallen angels (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6), it is likely this means we will have some rule in eternity over holy angels.
5. Since angels are “ministering spirits” to serve the saints (Heb. 1:14), it seems reasonable that they will serve us in glory.¹¹

¹¹ MacArthur, John, Jr., ed. The MacArthur Study Bible. electronic ed. Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997. Print.

So since we are going to judge the saints and angels, are you not unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

In other words *the shame is now applied in vv.4-6...*

IV. The Shame Applied (vv.4-6)

Paul summarizes by saying, “So if you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church? 5 I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren, 6 but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers?

A. The law courts deal with matters of this life (v.4a)

1. Unsaved judges are not given places of honor or esteem by the local church
 2. They are, of course, respected for the work they are doing in the world, but as far as church matters are concerned they do not have any jurisdiction¹²
- B. The law courts are of no account in the church (v.4b)
- C. Suing one another is a shame (v.5)

Such conduct...is not only a sinful shame (v. 5), but a complete failure to act obediently and righteously. Christians who take fellow Christians to court suffer moral defeat and spiritual loss even before the case is heard,

¹² MacDonald, William. *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. Ed. Arthur Farstad. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995. Print.

and they become subject to divine chastening (cf. Heb. 12:3ff).¹³

Paul exhorts them later in 1 Corinthians 15:34 (NASB) by saying, “Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.”

The mark that should most characterize Christian brothers is love.

John makes it absolutely clear that “anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another” (1 John 3:10–11).

¹³ MacArthur, John, Jr., ed. The MacArthur Study Bible. electronic ed. Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997. Print.

Love, however, did not characterize the Corinthian brothers and sisters.

They were acting like the unredeemed, and, as Paul would remind them a few chapters later, a Christian without love is “a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal”; he is, in fact, “nothing” (13:1–2).¹⁴

What the Corinthians needed to was to realize their defeat...

V. The Defeat Realized (vv.7-8)

A. If you have lawsuits that is a defeat (v.7)

“Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another.”

¹⁴ MacArthur, John F., Jr. 1 Corinthians. Chicago: Moody Press, 1984. Print. MacArthur New Testament Commentary.

A believer who takes a fellow believer to court for any reason always loses the case in God's sight.

He has already suffered a spiritual defeat.

He is selfish, and he discredits the power, wisdom, and work of God, when he tries to get what he wants through the judgment of unbelievers.¹⁵

B. It would be better to be wronged or defrauded (v.7)

If the brother has wronged us in any way, our response should be to forgive him and to leave the outcome of the matter in God's hands.

The Lord may give or take away.

¹⁵ MacArthur, John F., Jr. 1 Corinthians. Chicago: Moody Press, 1984. Print. MacArthur New Testament Commentary.

He is sovereign and has His will and purpose both in what we gain and in what we lose.

We should gratefully accept that.

When Peter asked Jesus how often he should forgive a brother who sinned against him, the Lord replied, “seventy times seven” (Matt. 18:21–22), a figure that represented an unlimited amount.¹⁶

C. You have wronged and defrauded your brethren (v.8)

And you do that everytime you choose to refrain from loving one another and forgiving

¹⁶ MacArthur, John F., Jr. 1 Corinthians. Chicago: Moody Press, 1984. Print. MacArthur New Testament Commentary.

CONCLUSION

1. So Paul's message to the Corinthians is to stop taking your disputes to unbelievers.
2. If you have a problem with another Christian, go and talk to them alone (Mat.18:15).
3. Love and forgive them because God has forgive you of your many sins.
4. None of this is possible without Christ in your life.
5. If you're not a believer, today I call you to repent and put your faith and trust in Christ who alone can save you.
6. Let's pray.

