

1 Corinthians When Faith & Life Collide

Study 6

The Gospel and Law Suits

1 Corinthians 6:1-12

1 Corinthians 6:1-12

“1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? 2 Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? 3 Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? 4 If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge? 5 I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren? 6 But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers!

7 Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated? 8 No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren! 9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

12 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.”

Background

1. For each of the rhetorical questions Paul was asking below, what does it imply? Choose the right answer.

a) Rhetorical question #1: Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints?

- A. If we have a dispute with another Christian, we should go to court to settle it
- B. If we have a dispute with another Christian, we should go to church members to settle it

b) Rhetorical question #2: Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?

- A. As adopted sons of God, we will one day rule and judge the world together with God
- B. As adopted sons of God, we will one day condemn the world together with God

c) Rhetorical question #3: And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

- A. If we are capable to judge the world one day, we are capable of judging the trivial matters in church
- B. If we are capable to judge the world one day, it is a secular judgement and should not be mixed with trivial matters in church

d) Rhetorical question #4: Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?

- A. Judging angels means that we would one day settle disputes between them. Since they are in the spiritual realm, it means it is not relevant to church life.
- B. Judging angels means that we would one day settle disputes between them. Since they are of a higher status, it means we are more than capable to settle matters regarding church life.

e) Rhetorical question #5: If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge?

- A. The least esteemed are the ones with no standing in the church - unbelievers. They should not judge since they will not judge the world one day.
- B. The least esteemed are the ones with no standing in the church - unbelievers. They should judge since they will judge the world one day.

f) Rhetorical question #6: Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers!

- A. There are no wise men in church who are able to arbitrate and mediate so we go to settle it in the court of law
- B. There are wise men in every church who are able to arbitrate and mediate so we do not have to go to settle it in the court of law

g) Rhetorical question #7: Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated?

- A. One party wins and the other loses when Christians settle things in court
- B. Everyone loses when Christians settle things in court

2. Why is it wrong to sue one another in church?

- In vv 5-6 it is wrong to sue each other in church because it brings shame upon the church as instead of being a beacon of light of purity to the society it shows itself in these suits to be no different. It damages the reputation of the church, making it harder to reach out.
- It brings disputes between Christians to be decided by Non-Christians and this is an embarrassment and shameful thing as Christians washed by the blood of Christ as supposed to be holy and righteous in vv 11 and non Christians are not washed by Christ's blood and are unrighteous and are destined to not inherit God's Kingdom vv 9-10. How can disputes between the righteous people of God be decided by the unrighteous?
- Christians are more than competent to decide and resolve conflicts amongst themselves as they are destined to judge the angels in v3

1 Corinthians 6:7-8

“7 Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated? 8 No, you yourselves **do wrong** and **cheat**, and you do these things to your brethren!”

3. What were the Corinthians accused of in v. 8?

- They were cheating and defrauding other fellow Christians

4. Based on the video lecture, in the context of 1 Corinthians, which 2 types of law exist during that period? What are the differences?

- Civil law
 - Related to grievances and disputes
- Criminal law
 - Everyone is subject to governing authorities
 - God puts them in place to
 - Related to crime

5. In the Corinthians' case, who generally oppresses who with lawsuits?

- Those with higher social rank vs those with lower social rank - social standing
- The rich vs the poor - financial clout

6. What are the possible motives for a lawsuit against a Christian brother/sister?

- Retaliating one-upmanship
 - Humiliating one's adversary and proving oneself to be socially superior
- Results in factionalism and rivalry, not unity

1 Corinthians 6:1-12

“9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.”

7. If a professed believer continues to sin over and over again without repentance, what does that indicate about him/her?

- Indicates that the person is not a true believer
- This passage is a warning against those who make sin a practice
- Hebrews 10:26-27
- Matthew 13:38-40

8. What was Paul warning the Corinthians about?

- Warning to the Corinthians if they persist in the same evils as “the wicked”, they are in the same danger of not inheriting the kingdom

1 Corinthians 6:11-12

“11 And such were some of you. But you were **washed**, but you were **sanctified**, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

12 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.”

9. What is the reason Paul was saying that the Corinthians should not pursue lawsuits against one another in v. 11?

- We have received mercy

- We have been cleansed
- We were sanctified, made holy, made just in the name of the Lord Jesus
- If we were forgiven by the Lord Jesus at the cross, we should do the same to others who have wronged us

10. Paul mentions a warning and also the Gospel to curb these things from happening. How do these 2 come hand in hand to keep us from falling into sin?

- Warning
 - Results in repentance
- Gospel
 - Makes us holy

11. What is the problem with lawsuits?

- Lacks eternal foresight
- Discredits the testimony of the church

12. If we should not sue a fellow Christian, how should we address private disputes?

- Matthew 18 - Fellow church members should settle private disputes
- Christians have an obligation to maintain justice so confronting the brother might lead to repentance and restorative justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation

13. If we or the church are sued, can we defend ourselves? What would be the first recourse?

- Yes, this passage is about attempts to defraud
- However, the first recourse is to seek Christian arbitration

Extra:

A. Mini case study: What would you do if a Christian in church cheats you of your money?

- B. Mini case study: What would you do if a Christian in church does not fulfil a contractual agreement or obligation with you?**
- C. Mini case study: What would you do if a Christian in church crashes into your car?**
- D. Mini case study: What would you do if a Christian in church who is your ex-husband, is now not paying the alimony?**

Takeaway

- A. It is wrong to sue each other in church because it brings shame upon the church as instead of being a beacon of light of purity to the society it shows itself in these suits to be no different.**
- B. Lawsuits damage the reputation of the church making it harder to reach out.**
- C. It brings disputes between Christians to be decided by Non-Christians and this is an embarrassment and shameful thing.**
- D. Christians washed by the blood of Christ as supposed to be holy and righteous in vv 11 and non Christians are not washed by Christ's blood and are unrighteous and are destined to not inherit God's Kingdom. How can disputes between the righteous people of God be decided by the unrighteous?**
- E. Christians are more than competent to decide and resolve conflicts amongst themselves as they are destined to judge the angels.**

Case Study

Case 1 – Theft

A few years ago a member of our church was caught stealing money from the offering bags to the tune of over RM 100,000. An independent group of matured Christians found that the thief was not really repentant. Some in the church wanted to report the matter to the police and others wanted to settle the matter in the church itself with counselling.

Who was right and why?

To really answer the question above we must be sure of what Paul was writing about. What kind of law suits were going on in the church? Vv 2 Why were they happening Vv7-8

The cases involved very trivial cases for example one believer insulting the other or fighting over a piece of property we find this mentioned in vv 2 In verse 6-8 we read that the law suits were really because some of them wanted to defraud others

1 Corinthians 6:8 Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers.

Thus it is clear that there were disputes between brethren in church when one party tries to get the better of another out of greed.

In the case of theft of money from the church esp of an unrepentant brother, this is a criminal breach of the law and is an offence against the state. Imagine if it were worse, one brother rapes a sister in church or even murder another brother, Christians in these cases are not allowed to set up their own courts to mete out justice. What if the death penalty was involved the state and not the church has the authority to mete out justice. So such cases of crimes must be left to the police especially in such cases where the person was not repentant we have read in 1 Cor 5 the person is to be "delivered to Satan" handed over the influence of Non Christians, excommunicated.

Case 2 – Dispute

Two members of your church got involved in an argument and could not resolve the dispute. One of them lodged a police report against the other because he had insulted her and when the leaders confronted her she replied that there was nothing wrong with what she had done after all it was not a lawsuit.

How should the dispute be resolved? Can you share about disputes you might have had and how they were resolved?

Case 3 – Clouded Judgement

If someone in church claims that you have insulted them and sues you for RM 1,000,000 and you are innocent of the charge. Read 1 Corinthians 6:7. The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already.

Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? Does this mean we are not to defend ourselves and just pay up?

To not defend ourselves would be a misunderstanding of the passage because Paul is making a rhetorical question. He says why not be wronged but look at 1 Corinthians 6:8 Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers. He is actually taunting these folk and asking them to be magnanimous enough to allow themselves to lose when the true situation was that they were trying to bully and oppress others in church