

Gamma 2017

Book	1-Corinthians
Topic	Christians and Lawsuits
Reference	1-Corinthians 6:1-11
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1 Corinthians 6:1-11 (NIV) **1** If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord's people? **2** Or do you not know that the Lord's people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? **3** Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! **4** Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, do you ask for a ruling from those whose way of life is scorned in the church? **5** I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? **6** But instead, one brother takes another to court—and this in front of unbelievers! **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? **8** Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers and sisters. **9** Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men **10** nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. **11** And that is what some of you were. 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.

Already you can tell in 1-Corinthians in the first half, especially you will notice that Paul is writing with great passion and quite a bit of anger because in chapter 5 he also starts with a bunch of rhetorical questions and really just getting at the members in the church of Corinth and showing them that what you are doing is no different than the pagans, in fact it is worse because in the knowledge of the person that is Jesus there should be change but at the same time there is still pagan things that are happening.

So already he put very-very harsh and very clear points that those who practice even such things and something along those lines ought to be kicked out from the church or excommunicated, in fact the text here says, what business is it mine to judge those outside the church, are you judge those inside, God will judge those who are outside. Expel the wicked person from among you. So already there is this connotation of judgment and bringing people to the court to be condemned, to have these conflicts to be resolved somehow or another but now Paul changes gears to actually bring up a lawsuit, a trial that is put before a judge that should never have occurred in the first place and this we can see in the first couple of verses.

So we see behind the rampant writings of rhetorical questions Paul is actually making a point. I can imagine what the original document that Paul was writing, what it would look like. I think it will be a quite angry writing style, really trying to make a point, trying to pour out emotion into what he is trying to say, but behind this string of rhetorical questions you will be able to see a number of things. So the first verse

1 If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord's people?

So this is a rhetorical question and the simple answer is actually 'No'. So this is the crux of the matter. There is a defamation and a counter lawsuit that was going on between two members of the church. So one person is suing another in terms of being defamed, either within the court or even outside the court and all this actually does not justify for any means of lawsuits. We have to understand that in the ancient times even until today lawsuits are expensive, it is unfair and most of the time unjust especially when it comes to two individual people because he who has the most money will most likely win the verdict. There was corruption even then and moreover it is very embarrassing.

Why it was embarrassing?

It is actually more embarrassing than it is today because in modern societies nowadays all court trials are held in a close room or there is some media but it is in the room of a sort where you can either make it public and even if you make it public some people will come and some people will not come and if it is private then no one is allowed other than the judges than the witnesses and the lawyers. These cases however are a public hearing. The judge's seat is normally outdoors and they tend to happen at the gates where the bystanders as they go along will see the hearing that is going on and the news spreads from them across the city according to people own interpretation of the case.

The second part of the rhetorical question is,

2 Or do you not know that the Lord's people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? 3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!

So what Paul is really doing is saying that the things that we are going to do in the future for the sake of the kingdom of God is so big that these things are actually trivial. Why are you even bringing these to the courts, you can actually settle them among yourselves. Now of course there is a very interesting verse over there that Paul is saying, **will we be judging angels?**

If we are judging angels which angels and how? Well there are a few theories of this.

1. They say that there is a possibility that we will be judging angels in general. Hebrews 2:5-9 directs us into that direction, but is not really pointing the finger to the angel and saying you are wrong, but rather it is a comparison of our lives here as we worship God and the angels will be also held accountable in comparison.
2. Another scholar says, we will be judging angels, the word angels could also mean patrons of the nations. This is coming from the culture of that time where they say that in every country there is an angel or a being that is insuring justice and rule and order is being put in every country. This is another theory but there are no verses to support this.
3. Fallen angels, because just as we will be condemned by the devil himself, we follow Revelations chapter 12, we will be accused but then Jesus will secure us in his name, but when it comes to the

time of the fallen angels, it is our turn. So that is Matt chapter 25, 2-Peter and Jude 1:6 seems to elude to that direction but not really-really strong.

These theories are actually weak because they don't directly say that we will be judging angels but what Paul is actually doing is that he is actually over-realizing the eschatology meaning what is going to happen when Jesus comes and in realizing of what we need to do for that kingdom what then we are bothering about among ourselves within the church is actually trivial and small. So Paul's main point because it connects the vision of what will happen in the kingdom of God and what is happening now. In comparison what we are doing now is really-really trivial and small.

So Paul is actually addressing the matter and the matter is that

4 Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, do you ask for a ruling from those whose way of life is scorned in the church?

Again another rhetorical question, he says of course not you don't. So the simple principle that we can learn from this is that disputes within the church should remain within the church. Meaning, if you have an issue with your brother Jesus said himself that if you have an issue against your brother lay your offering down before the altar and go to your brother to reconcile before coming back. So this is therefore the modus operandi within any church. Now of course this does not overwrite Romans chapter 13, it says

1 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, 4 for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on wrongdoer. 5 Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.

So what Paul is saying in the big picture of this is that there is a separation of power between two bodies, one is the church and the other is the secular courts. The church is actually vested the responsibility to hold accountable for the morality of the community. Meaning, we as a church we represent the kingdom of God, we look into this world, we see what is unjust, what is unfair, the abuse, the poor, the widow, the orphan why are they not being handled. These things are moral issue. They are systemic in society and we therefore give an account to the court so that either we can work together or we extend the hand of the gospel to these people. The state on the other hand is charged with the responsibility to hold accountability of the legalities of the community and its institution. We are not only answerable to the kingdom of God, Paul is actually asking us to be careful, to be subject to one another. So then you see these two offices very clearly.

How does the church hold the state accountable over certain laws?

When a certain law is validated and even put into practice after a vote in parliament and the courts, the church will stand and look and see and ask whether is that law moral or immoral. Martin Luther King Junior stood up against the immoral law of segregation between colored people and white

people. Nelson Mandela together with Desmond Tutu, stood against the apartheid that was happening in South Africa. William Wilberforce was the first member of parliament to stand against slavery in United Kingdom to make it illegal and just before he died it was put into law that slavery shall be illegal.

The church time and time again has looked at the state and at great cost and at great sacrifice stood against the state because the laws are albeit legalized it was immoral and you must stand.

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

Paul is double emphasizing the wrong.

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? 8 Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers and sisters.

So the matter who wins or loses the lawsuit they both lose spiritually and such lawsuits when you bring out to courts, with all due respect, even though you bring out to the courts some resentment will come back to the church, people will start to take sides. So it goes back and forth and it causes division in the church and you end up seeing a complete loss of every sense of brotherhood in the community.

So what is the principle and the crux to solve this.

Paul says, *Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?*

Now Paul is not saying that you should be taken for granted, but Paul is actually reminiscing something that he possibly would have heard from the apostles who first heard this from the sermon of the mount where Jesus said, *If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well.*

Jesus is actually wanting to say, any way to extend the hand of grace extend it. In fact, Peter then emulates this in his writings. I-Peter chapter 2 and 3 he says,

19 For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God. (1 Peter 2:19)

9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. (1 Peter 3:9)

Peter is therefore emphasizing again, if evil is being done upon you don't try and fight back, try and see if you can negotiate and handle it peacefully, because in all cases we as the kingdom of God are to represent Jesus in every aspect, the grace giver, the person who is willing to take all the wrongs of our lives and the person who is actually giving us an extension of grace.

Timothy Keller told a story. After a Sunday service a young lady came up to Pastor Timothy and Pastor Timothy introduced himself and the girl said, it is my first time here I actually didn't know that there is a church here and Timothy said, "how did you come to know about this church?" She said, it

is funny because my boss comes to this church. He mentioned that he was Christian but he did not go into much detail. There was one time that I made a huge blunder and caused the company to lose a substantial amount of money more than my one-year salary and the boss instead of reporting it to the CEO so that he can just fire me, the boss said I will take the blame this time and he went to the boss this time and said, it is my fault she did it under my supervision I countersigned it so it is my fault. To which then the CEO said, found him the amount, give him the warning and did not give him his increment for the year, but all in all everyone gets to keep their job.

The woman looked at her boss with stark shock. She asked the man, why did you do that? The man said, it happens. Woman said, no, I mean nobody does that. Normally you just blame those who are below you and good bye and they have to find another job. To which then my boss said, I learned in church that we should be the extension of grace to others and I saw the economy today, if you got fired now you will not be able to find a job. It is going to be very difficult and you at your stage right now, you cannot take that kind of heat. I have been few years down the road, I can take that kind of heat so I took it for you so that you may have another chance. The woman said that moved me so much to my core that I wanted to know who is this person driving my boss to do such magnificent things and that is why I came to the church.

The heart of the matter is not just for being right at the expense of someone else but being willing to show the hand of God, the hand of grace to the people around us.

Paul now piles it up and says that you guys are all in trouble and so we see in the verses

9 Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

Notice the regression that is happening inside this text. The first half here albeit taboo to the Roman culture is happening all the time, they are swapping spouses, they are having sex with one another. When a man has sex with another man culturally it wasn't considered as being gay, it was just letting off some steam.

My emphasis here tonight is that, you will notice that Paul instead of designating groups of this is bad sin, this is worse sin, this is not so good sin, this is tolerable. No, he piles them altogether. So that means if you man are having sex with another man, you are going to be condemned. Actually Paul is also saying that those who swindle, those who drink a lot, those who insult people, those who are greedy, you are just as bad as the man who is having sex with another man and you are all being condemned and that goes to woman too. Paul is not emphasizing the point, Paul is actually generalizing it in saying even for those who slander and for those who commit the adultery, you are equally evil and so all will be judged equally.

This is the penalty that we will all face before God. Now Paul could have just ended here, ended us with a low, but Paul knew that in all of this some hope is required to prevent us from going back into legalism and going back into just following the law so that we may survive. So Paul gives this very profound verse. He says this

11 And that is what some of you were (wrongdoer). 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.

Notice this, you have the wrongdoer, the wrongdoer without Jesus and without the spirit of God, categorically speaking he is unclean, he is unholy, he is guilty. Before Almighty God you stand condemned and in the meantime other people within and without the community of Christ will use that to shame you and use that to condemn you. But Paul is saying that through Jesus Christ and the Spirit of God when we submit ourselves to his authority which is then sanctioned and practice in the church the unclean will be clean, the dirty will be made holy and the guilty will be made righteous and from being ashamed we are now called unashamed.

Two men were trying to shame each other but because of the gospel there is nothing to be shameful about and therefore there is no case involved. This is the power of the gospel if we heed to the spirit of God in the name of Jesus Christ then we can harness that passionate anger to things that really matter, things that we really need to do in order to change this country.