

Resolving Conflict in the Church

Cor 6:1-11

Intro: Chapter 6 is a practical lesson on proper behavior in the church. This is dealing with believers in the church. It has nothing to do with activities outside the church. We are commanded in Romans to obey the laws of the land; except when they go against the Scriptures. We must obey God over man and the laws of God over the laws of the land when they are in conflict. The laws in this country were always based upon the Word of God. It wasn't until recently that the Scriptures have been discarded as a basis for good law. The Corinthian believers had fallen back into their old habits and lifestyle. That by itself would explain the fact that they were warring with each other, defrauding and cheating, all the things you would expect from an unsaved person. This text reveals they were envious of fellow Christians, critical of fellow Christians, and took business and financial advantage of each other. They were at each others throat, simply reverting back to the way they were before their salvation. Here we have professing Christians taking each other to civil court before pagan judges looking for support.

This was a common practice over much of the Roman Empire in Paul's day.

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.

For centuries Jews had settled all their disputes either privately or in a synagogue court. 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. It was considered a form of blasphemy to go to court before Gentiles. Both Greek and Roman rulers had allowed the Jews to continue that practice, even outside Palestine. Under Roman law Jews could try virtually every offense and give almost any sentence, except that of death. 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.

American culture is a culture of fixing blame -- fixing blame on others. Whenever the President of our land slips a bit the media ask, "Why? Who is to blame?" When our favorite sports team loses, the question is asked, "Why? Who is to blame?" And on and on it goes. We are anxious to fix the blame somewhere. This "blame" culture may nowhere be so clearly seen as in the mountain of court cases brought in our land. It's getting to the point that when anything wrong

happens to anyone the first thought is to go to court in order to assign the blame to someone else.

I. The Condition of the church (6:1-8)

Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? [1 Cor. 6:1].

1. Of course, the basic problem was carnality (3:1-4); when Christians are immature and not growing, they cannot get along with one another. They lack the spiritual discernment to settle and solve personal problems.
2. This is an indicator of the condition spiritual condition.
3. Paul is not condemning courts of law (see Rom 13).
4. Believers must not be exposed before unbelievers, and certainly an unsaved judge lacks the spiritual understanding to deal with spiritual matters (2:14-16).
5. By dragging one another to court, the church members at Corinth were ruining the testimony of the church and disgracing the name of the Lord.

This may sound to you like a very strange statement, and it may need some explanation. He does not say that Christians are not to go to law. If Christians did not use the benefit of the law, they would suffer great loss at the hands of the unsaved. He is saying that Christians should not go to law against each other—Christian against Christian. The differences between believers are not to be taken to a secular court. They should be settled by believers. This is something which churches and believers in general ignore today.

After I had come to Southern California as a pastor, I was rather amazed one day when a man came in quite excitedly and wanted to bring a charge against an officer of the church. He claimed this man had beat him out of a sum of money in a business deal. He said, “Now I want you to bring him up before the board and to make him settle with me.” I told him, “I think you are approaching this the right way. When can you appear before the board and make your charges?” “Oh,” he said, “I’ve told you about it. That is all that is necessary.” I pointed out to him that I had no way to verify the charge. It would be necessary for both men to appear before the board. Then I asked him, “Would you be willing to accept the verdict of the board?” “Well,” he said, “it all depends on how they decided it. If they decided in my favor, I would accept it.” So then I asked him if he would accept the verdict if it were against him, and he assured me that he would not. Of course, I told him that we might as well forget the whole matter. I said, “You are not really willing to turn this issue over to other believers for a verdict.”

Church fights should not be aired in state courts before unbelievers. Individual differences among Christians should be adjudicated by believers. It is bad enough when

two Christians are divorced, but it is an extremely serious matter when Christians go before a secular court and air their differences before unbelievers. When a Christian couple come to me and tell me they simply cannot get along, and I see there is no way of working out a reconciliation, I advise a legal separation, not a court trial.

Why should a believer let other believers be the judges rather than take his case to the unsaved world for their judgment? Again, this does not forbid a Christian from going to court with an unbeliever. Why should two believers bring their differences to be settled by other believers? Paul gives a threefold reason regarding the capabilities of believers to judge.

II. THE ABILITY OF THE BELIEVERS

“Do you not know” that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? [1 Cor. 6:2].

1. If you are a believer in Christ, you will have a part with the Lord Jesus in ruling the earth someday.
2. This is not talking about the judgment at the Great White Throne, which will be the judgment when the lost appear before Christ.
3. This has to do with the adjudication of the affairs of the universe down through eternity.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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?
7. Paul insists that Christians are able to solve disputes, always. Do you not know that **the saints will judge the world**? And if the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? "

8. If you are one day going to sit in God's supreme court over the world, aren't you qualified to judge in the small, everyday matters that come up among you now?" It should be noted that the term law courts can also be translated "law suits."

9. He "*who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to Him I will give authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father*"

(Rev 2:26-27).

10. The Corinthian Christians, however, not only were not ruling themselves but were making a spectacle of themselves before unbelievers, airing their pride, carnality, greed, and bitterness before the whole world — the world that one day they would be called on by the Lord to help judge and rule in righteousness.

Saints will judge the world.

“Know you not” that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? [1 Cor. 6:3].

1. Saints will judge angels.

2. This probably came as a surprise to the Corinthians when Paul says “**know you not.**” When Paul said, “**Know you not,**” he was pointing out new info for them to consider.

3. This statement probably got their attention as it does mine. My first thought is “**Who are we going to rule over?**”

4. All I know is that man was made a little lower than the angels, and through redemption man was lifted into a place of fellowship with God, **a position above the angels.**

5. We are not told everything but enough to get our attention and imagination moving.

6. Scripture is not clear as to which angels we will judge. The fallen angels will be judged by the Lord (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6), but we are not told if believers will participate in that judgment.

7. The Greek (Krinō) for judge can also mean "**to rule or govern.**" That certainly would be the meaning if we are to have authority over the holy angels, for they will have no sin for which to be condemned.

8. I am inclined to think that glorified believers will help judge the fallen angels and exercise some rule over the holy angels.

9. If we are to judge and rule over the world and over angels in the age to come, we are surely able, under the guidance of Scripture and the Holy Spirit, to settle any matters of disagreement among ourselves today.

1 Cor 6:4-6

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?

1. Of course, not every Christian is a capable judge, but Paul is saying, “I speak to your shame, isn’t there a wise man among you?”
2. When you go to a secular court, you are saying that *none* of the saints are capable of judging.
3. There are always those whom we can put our trust in to resolve the issues.
4. Now why does a Christian have a capability to judge? Paul will give us three reasons:

1 Cor 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!

1. It is once again a pattern of behavior that is different from the world.
2. The world says fight for everything and anything and never let anyone do you in.
3. Well, here we have God telling **us to** just let it go.
4. Here is the controlling principle; everything I have is actually the Lord’s. If someone is trying to do me in, they are actually fighting with the Lord. The Lord is certainly capable of handling His possessions; which I just happen to be a steward over.
5. There are times when I simply let go and allow the other person to have their way, even though it may cost me or cause me some grief.
6. Some will say, “**you are being taken advantage of,**” my answer is “**yes**” that may be true but only if I allow it.

Luke 6:29-30

29 And unto him that smites you on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that takes away your cloke forbid not to take thy coat also. 30 Give to every man that asks of thee; and of him that takes away thy goods ask them not again.

“Know you not” that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God [1 Cor. 6:9–10].

1. Unrighteousness is not in the kingdom.
2. No secular judge or jury is equipped to make spiritual decisions, because they do not comprehend spiritual principles. That is why court cases that pertain to churches and Christians go crazy the minute they hit the legal system.
3. I have been in a number of court rooms and listened to many cases and I can tell you “right does not always prevail and wrong is not always judged correctly.
4. I always approach secular courts with fear and trembling.
5. Many a judge has been polluted by the system.
6. You never know what is going to happen in a secular courtroom and I would never willingly place my fate in the hands of such a court.

T.S. Why does a Christian have a capability to judge? Paul will give us three reasons:
1 Cor 6:11

And such were some of you: but you are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God [1 Cor. 6:11].

1. **“You are washed.”** It is “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration ...” (Titus 3:5).
2. We have been born again, washed. Because the mercy of God has reached down and touched us, we ought to know how to extend mercy. We can be merciful because we have experienced mercy. We should recognize that there are many wonderful believers today who have been washed. We should trust ourselves to them rather than to the unsaved.
3. **“You are sanctified.”** Sanctification in the Corinthian epistles is of two kinds, but I think here it means positional sanctification, that is, being *in* Christ.
4. This means that Christ is on our side and all believers are brothers in Christ. If another Christian judges me, it means that one of my *brothers* is judging me. I would be willing to trust myself to the judgment of a brother.

Ill. A little girl was carrying a heavy baby down the street. A man saw her and asked, "Little girl, isn't that baby too heavy for you?" "Oh, no," she said, "he's my *brother*." The relationship makes a lot of difference. A brother is not too heavy.

5. I am in Christ and my brother is in Christ; so I should be willing to trust my brother.

6. **"You are justified."** The third reason my brother is capable of being a judge is that his sins are already forgiven, as mine are. He has been declared righteous before the throne of God, as I have been.

7. How should Christians settle personal differences? They must first have the right spiritual values. The church is going to judge the world and the angels! This realization makes worldly disputes rather insignificant.

8. Too many Christians have warped values; the things of this world (especially money) are more important to them than the glory and praise of God.

9. Matters between Christians should be settled quietly according to the principles of Matt 18:15-17 and 1 Cor 6:5. If the two parties cannot reach an agreement, then they should invite some spiritual believers to meet with them and help decide. If the matter becomes known to the church (or outside the church), the members should appoint a group to examine the matter and give spiritual counsel.

10. I believe it is better for me to lose money rather than my testimony and bring shame on the church and our Lord,

11. 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.

12. If two Christian parties cannot agree between themselves, they should ask fellow Christians to settle the matter for them, and be willing to abide by that decision. The poorest equipped believer, who seeks the counsel of God's Word and Spirit, is much more competent to settle disagreements between fellow believers than is the most highly trained and experienced unbelieving judge who is devoid of divine truth.

Conclusion: Because we are in Christ, Christians rank above the world and even above angels. And by settling our own disputes, we give a testimony that we in fact have something the world lacks. When we go to public court, we are seen as no different than the rest of the world.

Paul was ashamed of the behavior of those whom he had taught and among whom he had ministered. They knew better. The mark that should most characterize Christian brothers is love. John makes it absolutely clear that the world will know we are Christians by our love; "*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). Love, however,

did not characterize the Corinthian brothers and sisters. Christian love actually is another way of stating that we put others first and are not self-centered. We are concerned about the well being of those we come in contact with. 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). The general rule is: Do not go to court with fellow Christians, but settle matters among yourselves if humanly possible.