

God's Word is so relevant to our lives. That ought not surprise us considering the fact its author is the One who designed us, who knows everything about us and what is best for us. Though we are more than 1900 years removed from the completion of the last book of the Bible, the Scriptures speak to contemporary issues. The Bible is *living*. In the Bible we truly find answers for the problems of life.

1 Corinthians certainly does this. In this letter Paul addresses a variety of challenges facing the congregation in the city of Corinth. And the answers he gave are vital for us...

Discuss: What are some of the problems addressed in the book?

Tonight: "When a Christian Has a Legal Problem with Another Christian"

Do Christians ever have odds with each other? Does it ever get to the point where one takes advantage of another (or at least one feels the other has done so)? Yes. What should happen in such cases? 1 Corinthians 6:1-11 shows us. This doesn't tell us what to do in every situation, but it gives us a case study and some relevant guidelines to follow.

I. Paul addresses the question *what?* (1-8)

What should happen when two Christians have a legal problem? First of all, here's what should *not* happen...

A. Don't ask the civil authorities to solve the dispute (1-3).

Q: What's the situation? Read v 1

See NIVsb footnote for clarification. "Paul seems to be talking about various kinds of property cases here (cf. the phrase 'rather be cheated,' v. 7), not criminal cases that should be handled by the state (Rom 13:3-4)."

That may be a helpful guideline, but as we'll see, the church ought to deal with its internal problems whenever possible—no matter what they are (for reasons Paul will map out next...).

Q: What are the reasons? Here are three...

1. The saints will judge the world (2).

Q: What job did God give Adam? To "have dominion"...

Q: What aim did God have in mind when He redeemed us in Christ? See Matt 19:28ff.

Rev 20:4 "I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

2. The saints will judge angels (3).

See 2 Pet 2:4 "For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment"

Also Jude 6 “And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.”

Since we will judge the world and angels...

3. *The saints are perfectly capable of handling such disputes.*

V 3b--“How much more things of this life!”

We shouldn't go to the world to solve internal problems.

B. Resolve the dispute in the church (4-8).

How?

1. *Appoint judges in the church (4-5).*

Q: What kind of people did Paul suggest to use (there seems to be some sarcasm here)? See v 4

Q: What's the point of Paul's question in v 5?

Key: If we are Christians, who lives in us? The Holy Spirit. And what resource do we have? The Word of God. We have the mind of God in the Scriptures and the Spirit of God to help us understand it. Surely, we can obtain the guidance we need from His Word in working through disputes, as opposed to going to individuals who have not the Spirit of God and who do not look to the Word of God.

What happens if we refuse to do this, however? Read v 6

2. *To refuse to deal with our problems harms our testimony (6).*

Q: How so?

Read vv 7-8 and answer this...

Q: There's something worse than losing personal property. What?

3. *It would be better to be wronged than to misrepresent Christ to the world (7-8).*

⇒There's something worse than losing personal property.

⇒It's far worse to misrepresent our Savior.

Q: And how do we do that?

This is though counsel, isn't it? We are so indoctrinated to think of our “inalienable rights” that this very notion sounds almost unbiblical—to suggest we should allow ourselves to be vulnerable, that something is more important than my “rights.”

Q: What is the goal for the Christian? To be like Christ (Rom 8:29)

Q: What happens when a Christian refuses to demand his rights in order to please the Father? He is behaving just like Christ.

Now the next question. First, *what?* Second, *why?* Often we turn those around. We like to know the reasons for something before we talk about doing it. But Paul gave the punchline first—Stop taking each other to court! And then he gave the theological reasons for the counsel.

II. Paul addresses the question *why?* (9-11)

Why should we refuse to go to the world to deal with our disputes? Two key reasons...

Note: Often the following verses are not seen in this context (I must confess I've never noticed the context before, yet I've used these verses frequently to give hope to people with great sin-baggage).

A. God will deal severely with people who wrong other people (9-10).

Q: What term does Paul use to refer to such people in v 9? The *wicked*

Q: What will happen to such?

1. The wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Paul lists ten types of "wicked" people. What do these individuals all have in common? Basically, these are all people who *use other people* for personal and selfish gain. Don't miss that.

What issue did Paul address in verses 1-8? There were people in the church who had been taken advantage of by fellow church members. That is key.

Is Paul condoning such activity? No. It's wrong. It must be dealt with. It *will* be dealt with. But by whom? By God.

2. We must keep that in mind as we experience injustice in this life.

Q: What does the command "Do not be deceived" in v 9 mean? Of what is Paul urging the Corinthians (and us) not to be deceived? (hint: keep in mind the above context)

Discuss: What difference will this truth make in our lives?

B. God has been gracious to us (11).

Q: How so according to v 11? We see God's grace in vivid color here...

1. We aren't what we used to be.

Perhaps the most beautiful word in the verse is "were." What does that word indicate?

2. We used to be wicked.

Q: How wicked? Look back at the list of ten vices. That's what *used* to be true of the Corinthians! Can God change the hard cases? Yes! How?

3. We have been changed.

⇒He washed us.

⇒He sanctified us.

⇒He justified us.

Q: All three verbs are passive. Who initiated and accomplished these activities? Why is it critical to remember this?

Application:

1. In your own words, what do verses 9-11 have to do with verses 1-8?
2. What should happen in the event that a church member has odds against another concerning a legal matter?