

High Peaks Bible Fellowship

Failure to Resolve Personal Differences 1 Corinthians 6:1-20

Introduction

- Paul begins this section by talking about how believers are engaging in lawsuits with one another in the secular courts.
- The connection with what he has previously said is based on the subject of *judging* which Paul dealt with in chapter five. Here in chapter six Paul explains another failure of the church to deal with the differences and disputes within the Corinthian congregation.
- Paul had included *covetousness* in his lists of sins within the church (see 1 Cor 5:10-11; 6:9-10). This may be what motivated some of the believers in Corinth to take each other before the secular courts.
- What Paul addresses here is another symptom of the divisive spirit within the Corinthian church. This church was quickly losing its testimony in the city of Corinth.

Lawsuits Among Believers Within the Church (1 Cor 6:1)

- Paul does not give any specifics of cases that are being brought by believers against each other, but the Greeks were known for their involvement in the courts.
- “Dare to go to law” (*tolmao*) = to bear one’s self boldly. They were showing a bold, unholy arrogance by taking their disputes before the secular courts. The fact that they were doing this indicates the severity of the contention and strife within the church; it is of the type that usually calls for arbitration by a third party.
- “Before the unrighteous and not before the saints.” Unrighteous = ungodly, unsaved, non-Christians vs. Saints = those consecrated and set apart as belonging to God, believers, Christians.
- Believers are in a sad state when they think they are more likely to get justice from unbelievers than from their own brothers. Some of the members of the Corinthian church were ruthlessly pursuing their own selfish gain, and they were using the Roman courts to do this.

Believers are qualified to arbitrate their own internal disputes (1 Cor 6:2-6)

- “Do you not know” = this phrase appears six times in this chapter (1 Cor 6:2, 3, 9, 15, 16, 19) with the implication that the Corinthians should have known or remembered all of these truths. Paul had probably taught these things during his ministry in Corinth, since he states them as undeniable facts.
- “Saints will judge the world” = the fact that believers will have a role in the government of the millennial kingdom had been implied in the Old Testament (see Dan 7:22) as well as in the New Testament (see Matt 19:28; 2 Tim 2:11-12; Rev 2:26-27; 20:4).
- In 1 Cor 5:12 Paul had stated that the church was not to judge those of the world, but that was in the context of judging during this present life. Here Paul states that believers will have a part in the future judgment of the world. This seems to refer to the role of believers in the millennial kingdom.
- “Are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts?” = You who will judge the world in the future should be capable of deciding relatively trivial cases among yourselves.
- “We will judge angels” = Jude 1:6 and 2 Pet 2:4, 9 say that angels will be judged, but here Paul tells us that believers somehow will be involved in that process. This was a truth that the Corinthians already knew, probably from Paul’s previous teaching.
- “Matters of this life” (*biotikos*) = literally, “things of this life” -- matters pertaining to one’s livelihood. In the papyri it is used of business matters. This important word tells us exactly what kind of lawsuits the

believers were bringing against each other.

- Paul argues from the greater to the lesser: if believers will be judges of the world and angels, they ought to be able to judge these smaller matters now.
- “Appoint them as judges” (*kathizo*) = the form of this verb can be either a statement (indicative) or a command (imperative). The NIV translates it as a command, while the NASB translates it as a statement in the form of a question.
 1. If it is a command, then “those of no account” would refer to men in the church who are not regarded as being very wise. But this seems to be contrary to what Paul states in verse 5, that it *does* require a wise man to arbitrate between believers.
 2. If it is a question, then “those of no account” would refer to men who are not accounted as members of the church (the “unrighteous” of verse 1, the “unbelievers” of verse 6). This seems to be a better fit for the context of this passage.
- Paul is not criticizing the secular courts here. On several occasions Paul himself had appeared before these courts and received a favorable ruling. What Paul is condemning here is the practice of Christians taking Christians before secular courts in order to settle their property disputes.
- “I say this to your shame” = it is a shameful thing that believers were taking their disputes before the secular courts. Is it possible that (in a church which boasts of its great wisdom) they could not turn to one of their own members to help settle their disputes?
- “Decide between” (*diakrino*) = to arbitrate the dispute. Instead of referring the matter to the arbitration of a judicious brother, they “go to law.”
- It is bad that believers should have these kinds of disputes; it is worse that believers should “go to law;” it is worst of all that Christians should do this before unbelievers!

Believers are acting like unbelievers (1 Cor 6:7-11)

- “Already a defeat” (*ettema*) = a judicial defeat in court, and a moral defeat in God’s eyes.
- “Wronged” = treated unjustly. “Defrauded” = to be robbed or deprived of something.
- It is much better to receive a wrong than to commit one! *Earthly* loss is preferable to the *spiritual* loss produced by lawsuits.
- Paul is saying that, rather than go before secular courts, and rather than set up “Christian courts” to handle these matters, they ought to have submitted to injustice or yielded their personal rights.
- Under the specific circumstances in Corinth, Paul concludes that it was wrong to go to court even to protect themselves from injury.
- Paul uses very strong language in verse 8: “You yourselves commit wrong and rob your brothers in Christ.”
- Instead of being willing to be wronged, the Corinthians were actively wronging the ones they claimed were trying to wrong them! They were returning evil for evil (Rom 12:17).
- “Unrighteous men will not inherit the kingdom of God” = unbelievers; the unsaved who are not “heirs” of the kingdom through their relationship with Jesus Christ. The kingdom of God refers to that future millennial kingdom. We know that when He comes at the end of the Great Tribulation, Jesus Christ will exclude all unbelievers from the millennial kingdom.
- “Do not be deceived” = The deception is that a person can actually be a believer and yet continually or habitually live an immoral lifestyle. If one who calls himself a believer is constantly engaging in immorality, he has a basis for questioning his relationship with Christ.
- “Neither fornicators (*pornos*) nor adulterers” (*moichos*) = married individuals who commit adultery.
- “Nor effeminate, nor homosexuals” = neither the passive participants nor the active perpetrators of this act.
- The unrighteous will have no share in God’s future kingdom because they are not related to Christ. They will one day be judged by the saints, but at the moment the Corinthian believers were acting no differently than the unsaved. Their future position should have affected their present practice. In light of this list, the Corinthians should have seen how sinful their actions were toward one another. If they thought otherwise, Paul says they are deceived.

- Some of the Corinthian believers would have personally identified with one or more of the sins on the list Paul just shared. Some individuals who are now believers once participated in some of these unrighteous activities, but they had experienced the new birth in Christ and were now able to turn from their old ways.
- “But” (*alla*) = emphasizes the strong contrast between their former state and their present position in Christ.
 1. “Washed” = purified (see Titus 3:5).
 2. “Sanctified” = set apart as belonging to God and devoted to the service of God.
 3. “Justified” = declared righteous in the sight of God.
- When a person has been washed, sanctified, and justified – he should not continually live in immorality.

A Proper View of Christian Liberty (1 Cor 6:12-20)

- Paul continues his discussion from the idea that believers are now washed, sanctified, and justified. They are saved by grace, and nothing can condemn them any longer.
- “All things are lawful for me” = this was apparently a slogan used by some of the believers in Corinth in order to justify their immorality. But this statement was not true unless it was restricted or limited.
- Christian liberty must always be limited by the principle of Christian love. Liberty that is not beneficial but detrimental to someone is not loving and should be avoided.
- “Not all things are profitable” (*sumphero*) = to bring together or contribute; to be expedient or worthwhile. Something may seem harmless in itself, but it may not bring any benefit or value to people.
- “I will not be mastered by anything” = to be brought under the power of something, to be enslaved by something. Many activities of the flesh can be addictive, and the principle Paul stresses is that a Christian should not be enslaved by the things of the flesh. If so-called Christian liberty leads to slavery, then it is not liberty at all.
- “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food” = apparently another direct quote from some of the believers in Corinth who were seeking to justify their immorality. They created an analogy between satisfying their appetite for food and satisfying their appetite for sex. They were claiming that it was lawful for them to do anything they desired, and that their Christian freedom was unrestricted.
- But Paul is saying here that believers should not live as though the most important thing in life is to satisfy their appetites. The body is no longer to be used as a tool for the fulfillment of the selfish desires of the flesh.
- Paul provides good reasons why the body should be used for the Lord’s service, rather than for unrighteous purposes:
 1. The body is intended for the Lord’s service because the Lord has given Himself for the body. The Lord is interested in our bodies, and especially in seeing that they are used properly.
 2. The body is meant for service to the Lord in this life because it will be resurrected as an incorruptible body.
- God will destroy the stomach and food (1 Cor 6:13), but the body will be resurrected just as the Lord was raised up (1 Cor 6:14). Therefore, the analogy between hunger and sex is not valid; the two are not at all comparable. There is a temporary relationship between the organs of digestion and the food we eat, but the relationship between Christ and the body is permanent.
- Some of the Corinthian believers saw no harm in visiting the temple prostitutes in Corinth and committing immorality. They were deceived into thinking that having relations with a prostitute was not a wrong use of their body.
- But they should have known better, because Scripture proves otherwise. An unholy union with a prostitute is a violation of the divinely established marriage union.
- How can believers be joined to Christ and joined to sin at the same time?
- The body can become a slave to sin or a servant of righteousness. If a believer gives his body to a prostitute, then the body becomes an unholy slave to the passions of the flesh. But God wants our body to be used as a servant of righteousness under the control of the indwelling Holy Spirit.
- The solution to immorality = FLEE !

This is the only proper Christian response to immorality of all kinds.

- “Every sin a man commits is outside the body” = this could also be taken as a third slogan used by specific believers in order to justify their immorality. Paul’s reply is a direct contradiction of this statement; he calls it a lie by saying, “The immoral man sins against his own body!”
- “Temple” (*naos*) = the inner sanctuary where God dwells. In the many temples of Corinth, the pagan deity was thought to actually dwell inside. In the case of believers, God the Holy Spirit actually does live within us.
- Here Paul talks about how Christians should view their body.
 1. They should remember that their body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.
 2. Christians have received the Spirit from God to help them against sin and the flesh.
 3. Christians have no right to misuse their body because they are not their own master. God gave a high price to purchase them and they now belong to Him rather than to themselves.
- Paul’s conclusion is that Christians must glorify God in the use of the body. Other people should be able to see how glorious God is when they see how His children use their bodies.

Points of Application

- Lawsuits between believers are a tragedy. Believers should be willing to suffer injustice at the hands of other believers rather than take their non-criminal cases before the secular courts.
- Sometimes it is valuable for Christians to reflect on their life before salvation, just as Paul prompted the Corinthians to do. Such we would still be except for the mercy of God ! We need to remember that we are not our own, but we belong to Christ !
- In deciding about the holy use of our bodies, believers should ask themselves three questions:
 1. Is this activity beneficial to me or others?
 2. Will this activity overpower and dominate me, and will the result affect others?
 3. Will this activity support the truth that the Lord owns my body and He intends for it to be used to bring glory to Him?

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Our primary purpose is to uphold the truths of the Word of God.

I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:15)

Our primary responsibility is to equip the saints for the work of ministry.

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-12)