

Being the Church in an Unbelieving World

WHEN EVIL GETS PERSONAL

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 6:1-8

INTRO: Last week we learned from a most uncomfortable passage about how as believers who love and want to honor the Lord deal with evil when it rears its ugly head in the church.

Today's passage is not nearly as uncomfortable, at least for most of us, however it is extremely practical and helpful; and possibly it **may be especially helpful to some of you at this particular time if you are wrestling with problems with your reconstruction or recovery from the hurricane.**

The beginning of 1 Cor. 6 gives us God's Word on what to do when evil gets very personal, enough that the thought occurs to us, "I think I will take him to court," or perhaps we are so angry with a person that we say, "I'm going to sue you!"

So, let me remind you of the context in the Corinthian church: division, pride, hostility among brothers and sisters in the church. Out of this, some church members began dragging other church members to court.

So the Spirit guided Paul to write these words to them.

1 Corinthians 6:1–8 NKJV 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!

Let's dig into this text.

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

Paraphrase – "How dare you who have a dispute against another member, go to a court where the judge is a lost person, instead of taking your case before a follower of Christ.

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?

Believers will one day be the judges – Millennial Kingdom. So if believers will be judging the world, can they not handle a little disagreement among church members?

3 Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?

Believers will even judge angels, probably speaking of fallen angels, the demons, so they are certainly capable of judging righteously in worldly matters.

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?

Judgments – disputes or cases to be taken to court

Appoint – sit down before

Least esteemed – literally – disdained or despised by the church

Paraphrase – If you have disputes serious enough to need a court, why would you take the matter before lost judges that the church despises because of their unrighteousness?

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?

You should be embarrassed! Do you not have one wise, righteous person who could hear both sides and render a godly judgment on the matter?

6 But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers!

Here is the heart of the problem. One Christian brother is suing another Christian brother, and by so doing gives unbelievers opportunity to castigate the church.

Now here folks we need to take note. **The strong prohibition here is that a Christian should not sue, or take to court, another Christian.**

This is not a prohibition against taking a non-Christian to court to stop or prevent evil. A non-Christian will not recognize the authority of the church or a believer in the church to render judgment. So God has provided secular authorities whom He appoints to restrain evil. Listen to what Paul said in Romans 13.

Romans 13:1–4 NKJV 1 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For **there is no authority except from God**, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. ... 4 For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do

evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.

If you have a matter where a lost person is doing you wrong, this is part of God's protection for you. No guarantee of justice from a lost judge, but you are not prohibited from trying if you believe you have a case according to man's law.

And, corporations cannot be Christians. So if a corporation wrongs you, as a believer you may go to court against one if you need to.

But not against a fellow believer! Nobody wins when a believer sues a believer.

Tell story of T** and D**.

- One sued the other and then the other counter-sued.
- I heard about it. I showed up in court. "What are you doing here?" I said, "I heard that I had church members suing one another contrary to God's Word, and came to see what this was about."
- Neither won anything.
- Both wasted their money in court.
- Both eventually left the church, not mad at me, but at each other and embarrassed that they had not been vindicated.
- Tragedy! Nothing but tragedy!

Don't do it. But some of the Corinthians had already done it, already sued their fellow Christians, so Paul says,

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?

The Spirit of God says to those Corinthians, "What you have done is a total failure!" You would be better off to have just accepted the wrong you believe your fellow Christian did to you. Even if you think he cheated you, just accept you were cheated. That is better than taking them to a secular court and making a mockery of the church."

He ends with,

8 No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren!

CONCLUSION – What should you do if a fellow Christian wrongs you in such a way that you need to seek remedy?

- Ask your fellow Christian to agree to one or three Christians who don't know either one be appointed to help you settle your disagreement.
- You can ask for mediation – let them help you find a middle road to get both of you on the right path.
- You can ask for them to judge the case, and you both agree beforehand to abide.
- Then you live with their decision, no matter what.

I and other pastors have set up such things to help fellow Christians. **The best time to decide you will honor God with obedience to this principle is before a dispute arises.**