

Parson to Person
1 Corinthians 6 (Part 1)
(Legal Matters—The Biblical Solution)

“Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? 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? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge? 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? But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers! 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? No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren!” (1 Corinthians 6:1–8 NKJV).

Legal Actions?

It is apparent that Paul was disappointed by the Corinthian’s legal actions against one another—when indeed the Church was equipped with all needed to solve disputes from “*within*” (5:12) rather than going “*without*” (5:12). He did not want the believers to “air their dirty laundry” before the unregenerated. It certainly did not testify to the unity and love by which the believers were to be known (see John 13:35). Moreover, Christians have been given gifting and protocols for solving disputes. Therefore, they did not

need to go nor should they have gone outside the Church to deal with their offenses.

The Principle and Protocol

Matthew 18 records a pre-Church Age applicational principle that certainly transcends the dispensational change from the Old Covenant into the Church Age.

Jesus said, “...if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector” (Matthew 18:15–17).

By this standard all believers must rely.

The “church?”

The “church” (Gk: ekklesia) referred to in the passage predated the “Church Age.” Therefore, the above reference was likely to the group of leaders “called together” (Gk: ekklesia) for analysis and decision making. In this context it may have been leaders in the local synagogue.

The Issues

It is unclear what the “lawsuit” issues were, and therefore, it is insignificant to our present learning. However, the principle instructions were clear: If you have an unresolved conflict, work toward a solution with the Church—not before the “*unrighteous*”

(vs. 1) *“unbelievers”* (vs. 6). In fact, Paul would rather see a believer *“accept wrong”* or *“be cheated”* (vs. 7b).

We must admit that there are times wherein the believer must allow his or her self to be cheated and other times when the offender must be trained to do right through acts of discipline. Each incident must be measured distinctly! For example, a slanderous report or misspoken word might be just as well “let go,” but a sexual molestation or other criminal act must be dealt with. Therefore, since the Church is equipped with *“the gifts of the Spirit”* (see 1 Corinthians 12), and by the *“wisdom that is from above”* (see James 3:17), we are able to identify error—egregious or otherwise, mediate, help solve wrongs, or, if needed, discipline the unrepentant (see 1 Corinthians 5).

You Shall Judge the World—and Angels?

Paul asked, *“Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?”* (vs. 3). Therefore, we can and must handle these issues *“within.”* Moreover, knowing that believers will *“judge the world”* (vs. 2), we must not commission what Paul in comparison called the *“smallest matters”* to those who don’t know the Lord.

Going to law against one another, and that before the unbelieving/unrighteous, was said to be an *“utter failure”* (vs. 7a). Therefore, lest we fall under the same criticisms Paul gave the Corinthians, we will practice church discipline and/or mediate healing and restoration between believers.

I have said before and will say again, “unresolved conflict is one of the greatest sources of grief to a pastor.”

Civil Courts and Law Enforcement in America

As Christians in America, under our form of governance, one might argue that there are times when a legal justice or law enforcement agency might best serve those of criminal offense. In these cases, meted out disciplines must be assigned by church leaders—including necessary reporting to legal authorities—for they do *“not bear the sword in vain”* (see Romans 13:4b).

I love you all,
Pastor Paul