

“Lawsuits and the Body of Christ”

1 Corinthians 6:1-11

Jerry Grey

2-10; 5-23

Introduction:

I do not know a man alive who has not seen the courts used as a battering ram. We live in a day of lawsuits. Lawyers are running behind the ambulances trying to make a buck.

“One call... that's all”

We have a medical system being destroyed by lawsuits.

High insurance rates, home insurance rates are up and divorce courts filled with bickering spouses and fighting neighbors.

The courts should be there for our safety and benefit; unfortunately, the courts have become a three-ring circus. We, as Christians, are not to spend our time in the courts unless it is absolutely necessary. I know Christians that sue people all the time. Suing people just for extra income is not Christian and suing your brothers and sisters in Christ is worse. I know that on occasion it happens and has to happen. God did set up the legal system to protect the people, especially the poor. Unfortunately it is not like that today. The courts are used for nefarious purposes.

Context:

The Jews were accustomed to handling their own disputes among themselves. The Priests, Elders and Rabbis were all problem solvers.

The Greek culture of Athens had infiltrated the church in Corinth. History tells us that litigation was a part of life for the Greeks. **In Athens, the courts were a form of entertainment for the people.**

As previously noted – the Corinthians had much disputing, jealousy, and divisions. That's going to lead to lawsuits sooner or later.

Most of us would just as soon avoid this foolishness – but on some occasions, we have to lawyer up for our protection.

~ May I say this theological lesson is amenable until you get sued. It becomes tough to follow in the heat of battle.

~ I have no neat outline so we will just go verse by verse and let Paul unfold it for us.

Verse 6:1 – Paul's Surprise Statement

Greek: “Dare you?” **τολμάω** - behold, dare, durst?

It has the implication of courage. “Do you really have the courage to do this?”

Paul has not been surprised at all the problems this church has.

- Jealousy, Divisions, Incest, Pride, Lawsuits, etc.

They were having disputes, **εχων**. (PAPTC) Continually having disputes. The practice had become common.

Greek: **πῶγμα** - A matter, dispute, business, an affair

- *How dare you take a matter to law. Judicially, a matter of law.*

- “Go to Law” or Go before the unjust law. - **ἀδίκων**

Law = **κρίνω** – Judgment, seeking, decision, to determine, judge or call into question.

- How dare you take a matter before the pagan law courts or Judges instead of before the saints.

Illustration: I have sat with people and helped them work out their disagreements before. When business deals go wrong or whatever. Sometimes it works – Sometimes it doesn't. For this to

happen, both parties must trust the leaders of the church and live with their decisions.

Gladys and the Lawnmower Case (MABTS). It is preferable to settle out of court.

Verse 2:

We will judge the world in the millennial kingdom. Coregents with Christ. The **hagios** (Saints) will judge the world. If we will be judging the nations, then why are we unfit to judge the matters of this life now. A church must have men and women who can spiritually handle problems in the body.

Rev 3:21-22

²¹ To him who overcomes, ***I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.*** ²² He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Daniel 7:21-22

¹ As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, ²² until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, ***and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.***

Matthew 19:28-30

²⁸ Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, ***you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*** ²⁹ And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. ³⁰ But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.

Are we not capable of judging small matters? The matters of the world are nothing compared to the greatness of the matters in the millennium or heaven.

It is amazing how small matters become huge mountains.

Verse 3: READ 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6

Quote: Vines – *“The church of the Lord Jesus Christ has a lofty destiny. If you are qualified to sit on the Supreme Court of the universe, and yet you can't handle petty disagreements among Christians.”*

2 Peter 2:4-5

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**; ⁵ if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; ⁶ if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; ⁷ and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men ⁸ (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)— ⁹ if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials **and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment**, while continuing their punishment.

NIV

Jude 5-7

⁵ Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord at one time delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe. 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. ⁷

In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.

NIV

2 Tim 2:12

“If we suffer with Him we shall **reign** with Him.”

If we reign with Him, will we not judge with Him?

Verse 3 shows a paradox or a juxtaposition of two worlds. It may be interpreted this way as well. The last phrase that refers to **life** or **things pertaining to life** is adjectival in nature (NIV says things of life and HCSB says ordinary matters). **Biotekos** is an adjectival phrase... life matters.

It refers to living or life. Christians should have the ability to transfer eternal principles from the future to the here and now.

~That's what Christian maturity is about. Using **eternal** wisdom in the here and now.

~ We will judge angels and can we not judge the (**Verse 2**) **mikros** or **elachistos** smallest matters (**superlative** form of mikros).

Greek: biotikos. The things that pertain to this life, or existence. **HCSB** says, ordinary matters. If we will judge angels then why would we not understand the things of this life. We are to judge with God's wisdom and the Word of God.

Verse 4:

Disgrace to church policy: Vines- Taking a member of God's fellowship to court is also a disgrace to the policy of the church. I believe that Paul is saying, “Why, when you have petty quarrels, do you insist on getting a judge who may not be a believer and may know nothing of God's mercy and forgiveness?” (v.4). The policy Paul presents is that when Christians in a church disagree, they are to solve their problems within the fellowship of the local church. Otherwise, they disgrace church policy before the world.

We have to remember, of course, that when Paul came to Corinth, only Aquila and Priscilla were disciples. He had won people to faith who organized themselves into the Corinthian Church, but for the most part, the community was still unsaved. Today we have Christian judges and Christian lawyers, and we thank God for them. But in those days, to go to court meant that both parties went before unsaved people (Vines p. 111- In Loc).

It would be great if each church were spiritually equipped enough to settle matters before they got out of hand.

Paul says that the least mature Christian, or lowest esteemed person that is saved, has a better chance of godly advice than a trained lawyer or judge who is not saved. He says, “I say this to shame you.”

Illustration:

During a divorce, two Christians are parting without a fight. Then the ungodly lawyers get involved. It goes downhill from there. Mercy and grace go out the window. Greed takes over.

God's not against lawyers or judges. He actually set the governmental structures up to protect us. When Jesus talked about experts in the law, he was referring to the scriptural law.

Yet, if we go before the unsaved, we get what we get. Even though we are forced into it at times. You may or may not get a Christian judge. Besides all this, the laws often are set and the judge is only able to interpret an unjust or ungodly law in your case. Many times, a judge has tied hands in pronouncing his verdict.

Verse 5:

It is a shame not to have a group of Elders to help solve problems. We call them Deacons at WBC.

This is why the scriptural qualifications are so high for deacons and leaders. What would it be like if I took a sensitive and difficult matter to the deacons and they don't know their bible? I make a tough decision and get no support because several deacons react from an emotion position instead of a biblical reference? For example, a church amputation. Then the pastor has less support.

I have had to explain to more than one deacon, or leader, biblical matters that they should already know how to deal with. At least support your pastor until you know the facts. Many times after a biblical decision has been made by Sanford and me, an uninformed or biblically ignorant deacon or leader undermines that decision unnecessarily.

* 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 8-10 (This is what Deacons and Overseers are biblically called to do).

1 Tim 3:1-10

Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. 5 (If anyone does not

know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. 7 He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

8 Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. 9 They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.

NIV

Titus 1:5-9

5 The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. 6 An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. 7 Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless — not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. 8 Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. 9 He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

NIV

Titus 2:1-2

You must teach what is in accord with **sound doctrine**. 2 Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.

NIV

You must know sound doctrine to teach sound doctrine.

All these things refer to “Body Life.” The church functions better as a body. * A family always handles matters better than outsiders would.

We would never think of asking a neighbor to discipline our children. The church should operate the same way.

Verse 6:

The reason for taking care of our own business is simple... our witness in front of unbelievers.

Instead of spending our time trying to make unbelievers comfortable in our midst – we just need to show them how a real family operates. I think that one reason the teachings of Christ are so limited on divorce is because it is almost impossible to not end up in court in a divorce. At least you will have to go before a judge to finalize the proceedings.

Verse 7: If you haven’t heard anything that was difficult to accept as of now, then here’s your verse. **This is big boy and big girl theology right here. Pull em up tight!**

Lawsuits in church show weakness. The church was already defeated. This is **hollos hettema**, which is wholly at fault. This is completely in error or deterioration. Paul says they were already defeated. “Defeated” here means deterioration. Fault. Error.

It is preferable to be wronged and defrauded than to sue.

Greek: adikeo- alpha privative. Unrighteous, hurt, injured, wrong, to be an offender or mistreated. This is an injustice. What Jesus did for us when He was not in the wrong and we were guilty.

* This is a hard word, especially if someone is trying to take advantage of you.

Greek: Cheated- Apostereo. This is to defraud or make destitute. People will try to cheat you if they can. To deprive another. People see lawsuits as a way to make money; they don't care who they hurt in the process.

Remember, this is a matter between brothers, and in my opinion, this refers to the local body. I am strong local body! This does not apply to the defense we may need for a pagan or infidel. Know your context.

Verse 8:

Instead of being a part of the problem, be part of the solution.

Now, pay close attention, the text does not say you should not defend yourself. You should not take a **brother** to court. But if he takes you to court, you have the right to use the court system God set up. If He did not intend for us to use it, He would not have created it. The context is about believers.

Note: Romans 13:1-5

Rom 13:1-5

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 2 Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. 4 For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore, it is necessary to

submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.

NIV

The text says we all have wronged each other, so have mercy and grace upon each other. We act unjustly and cheat. The way of the cross is not always easy. If a Christian brother has taken some money from you or refused to pay a bill and you've exhausted every means to get back what is rightfully yours, and you have followed the Bible's teachings about confrontations, and have gone to the Christian brother and then to the church, and he still refuses to be honest and make things right, then what should you do? The Bible says that you should suffer and endure the injustice (Matt. 5:11). The child of God is called to live a new caliber of life. You don't have to tell me that's a hard Word; I already know it.

Between verse 7 and 8 Paul says that if you go through all this and still can't get resolution, take the unjust treatment. I know this sand papers your soul. I understand. Yet, Paul says that it is better to be cheated than go to the world's lawyers for help. Remember this is a brother in Christ, not an unbeliever.

Illustration:

Not long ago, I heard about a man who loaned another Christian some money. Although he tried to collect his money, he couldn't get it back. He went to the Christian and told him the situation, but the Christian refused to pay it back. The man told the leaders of the church, but they wouldn't do anything either. Finally, the man who had taken the money received a receipt in the mail for the entire amount he had borrowed. Surprised, he telephoned the lender and said, "Listen, I never paid that debt. Why did you send me a receipt?" The other man replied, "Oh, I know that. I did everything I knew how to do to get you to pay me back, but you wouldn't pay. So, I just went to the Lord in prayer, told Him

about the situation, and sued you in the court of heaven. Jesus said that He'd pay me back, and so I sent you that receipt." This is the way of fellowship, the way of dignity, the way of the cross. God wants us to live as Christians and not to air out our problems before a lost world.

When I was in Memphis I painted houses after graduation. I painted my neighbor's house and they had a friend that wanted me to paint several rooms for them. They got an inheritance and bought a new house that need lots of work done on it. I painted cabinets, the kitchen, and then began painting a large study that had old paneling on it. Their request. I painted the paneling with kltz and quit for the weekend. The wife didn't like the cabinets and fired me before the next visit. They were believers and did not pay me for the work that I did. I did exactly what they asked me to do. Because of my neighbors that I loved so much, next door to my house, after a lot of prayer and consideration, I let it go. This was a hard decision. I turned it over to the Lord and asked him to take care of it.

From that day forward until Susan finished her residency program, I always had work and most people paid me more than I could have imagined for painting their houses. My little side hustle turned into a pretty good business. We were set financially until we moved to Atlanta. I always knew it was God's blessing on us because I handled that situation biblically. Many people actually paid me more than I charged them, why? God always impressed my heart that He was paying me back.

When you find yourself in a situation like this, do your best to do what's right. Only after that will you feel comfortable going to

court if it becomes necessary. Take the high road and wait on God, e.g. Rick and the public road dispute in the mountain cabin.

Remember that God can make all grace abound towards you.

Verses 9-11:

This list of 10 wicked people was to remind the Corinthians of their past life. He wants them to realize that they are not to act like the world. Paul says in verse 7 that a public display of division in the church ***“is already a moral failure.”***

These next few verses are difficult to swallow.

People who habitually live out these sins will not go to Heaven. They are all characterized as wicked or unrighteous. These are people that have never committed their lives to Christ. They are called, “the unrighteous.” However, as we saw in the beginning of chapter 3 and 5:11. Christian people are susceptible to these same sins, too.

Often times it is extremely difficult to determine if the person is lost or just a carnal Christian. I believe that the scripture teaches us that a lost man will sin continually without remorse or any determination to exit the sin. The carnal Christian can fall but should not live in the ditch, so to speak. Chapter five tells us that the lost person is prideful and public with their sins. There is no remorse. There is no grief associated with their sin (Chapter 5).

Do not be **deceived** – **πλανᾶω, (P Pass Imp)**. Do not be seduced or go astray, to be out of the way. Today, we call it tolerance. Paul says, ***“You should know this... the people who commit these sins, without remorse or grief are not going to heaven.”***

Paul says these people are unrighteous (**adikoi**). We are righteous. The lost are not to do these things, surely a saved man should stay clear.

2 Cor 5:21

21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

KJV

1. Fornications – Sexually immoral. – **πόρνος**,
2. Idolaters – Image worshippers. Anything that you put before God.
3. Adulterers – **μοιχός** - One who has intercourse with another's spouse.
4. Effeminate, soft, male prostitute, homosexual, catamite. – **μαλακός... one who is male and in a relationship with a male.**
 ... of raiment - makes addicted to lewdness and addicted to the sins of the flesh.
 A clear distinction of male and female.
 * men are to be men, period.
5. Homosexual offenders - **άρσενοκοίτης**
 An abuser of oneself with mankind - A sodomite. A self-defiler.
6. Thieves – Kleptes - **κλέπτης** – stealer.
7. Covetous – Eager for the gain of others. **πλεονεκτής**.
8. Drunks – **μέθυσος** – Tipsy, Sot, intoxication.
9. Slanderer or Revilers – **λοιδορος** – **loidoros**, mischief, abusive, railer, abusive.

10. Swindler – Extortioner. 'αρπαξ.

Is this a group of people you want handling the matters of life you hold dear to your heart?

Verse 11:

“Were” – key word.

1. We are washed – A M Ind. Past tense, to fully wash (Reflexively)
2. Sanctified –
3. Justified –

Paul says that some of the Corinthians **were** unrighteous and totally depraved. They **were** unrighteous.

In His name and by His Spirit they, we, us... were washed, sanctified and justified. That makes us righteous.

Closing:

Application

1. It is not godly to sue for any and every reason. Frivolity.
2. Do not sue a brother in Christ.
3. It is better to let the Elders of the church settle the matter and not the Gentiles.
4. If sued, you have a right to defend yourself.
5. God has a way to make all grace abound to you if you choose to be defrauded.
6. The world has no mercy and grace.
7. The weakest member of the church is wiser than the unrighteous.

8. Love covers a multitude of sin.
9. The biblical rules are different in and out of the church.

Rev 21:8

8 But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

ESV

1 John 1:5-10

5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

NIV

The key to these passages is the word walking. If you are walking or living in the dark you are in serious trouble. Let me illustrate this this way. A sheep will fall into a ditch and get dirty but he will not want to remain there. A pig will stay there from now on because he likes the mud and dirt.

Verse 11 gives a clear distinction between lostness and salvation.

