

I Corinthians Lesson # 12
The Church & The Law
Pentwater Bible Church
Daniel E. Woodhead
December 20, 2009

1 Corinthians 6: 1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?

Here was an additional divider of the Church at Corinth. They were taking their disputes between each other to the civil court system. He is not saying we must not use the civil courts. He is saying that believers, and that means true born again believers, should not sue each other in the civil courts to resolve disputes. God will not work in believers that are in a state of sin. Therefore when they are at odds with each other and unwilling to peaceably settle the issues through mediators with their own congregations they are said to exist in a state of sin. If we have an issue with another believer we must use the Lord's plan in Matthew 18 not our own. We have to trust genuine believers to clearly evaluate our disputes and allow them to provide a settlement to these situations.

This does not mean that we are not to use the court systems at all. We can use them when the law decides to provide retribution for crimes against us (Lex Talionis). Or we can use it against an unbeliever if the situation is grave enough that it is warranted. One should consult with other believers first to determine the feasibility of such an action.

1 Corinthians 6: 2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

We know from our study of the Revelation that the declaration was made in Rev 3:21 that overcomers or believers will sit with Christ at the Throne of God in judgment. We will be judges in the Millennium over the nations. Just as Christ said in Rev 3:21 that we will sit with Him on His Throne He said in John 5:22 that all judgment is committed to God the Son who is The Lord Jesus.

We also see from Rev 20:4 that during the millennium we will co-reign with the messianic King over the Gentile nations. We will be the King's representative authority and will carry out His will via decrees to the nations. Therefore with such a strong role in judging in store for us we are definitely worthy to judge small disputes in the present day and age of the Church here on the earth.

1 Corinthians 6: 3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?

Christians will judge the fallen angels of Genesis Chapter six that Satan took with him when he was cast out of Heaven (2 Pet 2:4). In Jude six the Lord says that they will be judged at the Great Day of Judgment. This will be the Great White Throne judgment of Revelation 20. Now if we are going to have this awesome responsibility God surely has given us the capability to judge issues between believers on the earth in this age.

I Corinthians 6: 4-6 If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers.

The issue here is the participle translated “least esteemed” would be better rendered “men who have no standing” in the church, that is, *non-Christians*. The sad text of verse one to which Paul would refer yet a third time in verse six was thus heard again. He is simply emphasizing the fact that when the Corinthian believers were faced with disputes in this life with other believers they were choosing to have them settled by heathens.

Paul’s comments were producing shame among them at the realization of what they were doing. This was a horrible example they were setting for the Church and especially the unbelievers that were watching them in evaluation for possible entry into the body of believers. It is always better for the true Church to deal within our own body of believers to settle disputes so that nothing hinders our witness for Christ to the world. When we do this sort of thing we damage our testimony for Christ to the world. When David sinned with Bathsheba Nathan the prophet said, “Because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.” In other words our testimony is damaged by our sinful behavior.

I Corinthians 6: 7-8 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.

Their greed dishonored God. The important issue was lost before the case had begun. If they had been maturing in the faith (Sanctification) they would not have become so self centered that one would actually bring a lawsuit against another. They were still spiritually immature. Where they needed to grow was to realize that mundane loss was preferable to the spiritual loss, which the lawsuits produced. As it was, the Corinthian lawsuits seemed not to have been so much a matter of redressing wrong or seeing justice served but as a means for *personal gratification* at the expense of fellow believers. This was “Christian body life” at its worst! Believers should never be wronged and defrauded by other believers at any time. Mature and even genuine believers would not act in this manner. If they were wronged by other believers they should have had it settled within the body and accepted the outcome. When Christ said in Matthew 5:39 that we must be willing to “turn the other cheek,” he was not saying to forget the offense and ask for more. He was saying to let the proper channels of authority handle the situation. However, by their own sinful self centered pride the Corinthians “took matters into their own hands.” They sought vengeance, which belongs to the Lord.

I Corinthians 6:9-10 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor

thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

The wicked would have no share in God's future kingdom because they were not related to Christ, the Heir (Mark 12:7). The saints at the Great White Throne Judgment will judge the wicked. (1 Cor. 6:2) This will be entirely on the basis of their works (Rev. 20:13), which would condemn them. Yet the saints were acting no differently. Paul was making it abundantly clear that people that do the things they were doing were not going to inherit the Kingdom. In other words they were not acting like "saved" Christians on the way to Heaven. They needed to reevaluate their lives to see if they were truly believers. If they thought that they were actually born again Christians and continued doing these abominable things then they were deceiving themselves (1 Cor. 5:11; Rev. 21:7-8; 22:14-15).

The list of offenders was similar to that noted earlier (1 Cor. 5:10-11), which no doubt corresponded to problems in Corinth and in other large cities of the day (Eph. 5:3-6). Homosexuality and male prostitution, for example, were a known characteristic of Greco-Roman society. Plato lauded homosexual love in *The Symposium* (181B). Nero, emperor at the time Paul wrote this letter, was about to marry the boy Sporus (Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars*, 6. 28), an incident bizarre only in its formality, since 14 of the first 15 Roman emperors were homosexual or bisexual.

Today some, indeed many believe that it is just another lifestyle. The repugnance which many of us sense toward the practice out of our clear consciousness must be altered so we see them as Christ see them as sinners and not as vile animals in need of destruction. Even Sodom was not condemned for just their homosexual behavior. It was pride, too many material things, nothing to do, failure to help the poor, being haughty which all led to the abomination of homosexuality (Ezekiel 16: 49-50).

It is clearly a sin. It is also one that has possible redemption for those that turn from the behavior and embrace Christ.

I Corinthians 6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Paul closes this passage with a reminder that some *were* in this state of behavior. They were made right with the blood of Christ. If they are truly saved they have the power to overcome these sins. If not then they will revert to the ways of the devil and practice these abominations without remorse.

Questions? Contact Daniel Woodhead at: 616-928-0974 or e-mail at:
Pentwaterbiblechurch@scofieldinstitute.org

