

## Lawsuits and Sex

### 1 Corinthians 6

CCC Feb 18, 2023

Annual meeting transition

Next three weeks would appreciate your prayers – one week at National Board Meetings. Two Sundays in Green City with our Reach One More Partnership. You will be well cared for with Alex the first week, Jed the third week and a new friend – Jen Ashby, a minister from New England who is a vice chair on the Board of Directors, and a single woman in ministry will do our message on singleness and that will be a big treat for us all. So don't miss the next three! And don't forget to pray for me.

**This week** – our subjects are Lawsuits and sexual immorality. And I want you to know that I did not pick these subjects because I am a glutton for punishment or want a full email inbox. We are going through the book of 1 Corinthians – a letter from Paul to a church in Corinth - a messed up church that gives us instruction on how to thrive in messed up churches. And one of the reasons you do expository – chapter by chapter preaching is that it keeps preachers like me from weaseling out of tough subjects. It lets the Bible take us through the full counsel of God's teaching rather than capitalizing on all of my favorites. So open up to 1 Corinthians 6 and here we go.

If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord's people? <sup>2</sup> Or do you not know that the Lord's people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? <sup>3</sup> Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! <sup>4</sup> Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, do you ask for a ruling from those whose way of life is scorned in the church? <sup>5</sup> I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? <sup>6</sup> But instead, one brother takes another to court—and this in front of unbelievers!

<sup>7</sup> The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? <sup>8</sup> Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers and sisters.

So what happens when two believers have a dispute with one another? How should they handle it? Should they go to court? Notice in this passage that this is a civil

dispute and not a criminal matter. We are not talking about theft, murder, or some kind of domestic abuse. Those are a different category. This is talking about a civil dispute.

It might be two business guys. It might be a contract violation. It might be a lawsuit or negligence. And Paul says – look, there is a HUGE downside to this. You drag your dirty laundry in front of the courts and it tarnishes the reputation of Christ. The media gets ahold of it and everyone's reputation goes downhill.

Kelle and I hired a Christian roofing and siding company based in North Omaha. We wanted to give them business to help North Omaha Christian businesses succeed. But they did terrible work. Terrible. Gaps in the siding, pieces falling off of the house, leaks... And we had a choice. Work with the company or take them to court. We called the workers, then the boss, then the owner. We had to work with them in frustrating slow responses for months. And while they did come back and make significant process, they never finished the job. So, do we sue? Nope. We just sucked it up. It is better to be wronged than to drag a situation in front of the non-Christian world.

In another story, there was a Christian college here in town – College A. A Christian college from out of town wanted to set up an extension site here – College B. So... college B called college A to see if there was any collaboration possible. But the president of College A refused the calls. They heard about the plans and took it to court- trying to make it impossible for College B to get the permits to come. I had the unfortunate position of knowing both parties, so I called College president A to see if I could broker a conversation or mediate. And to encourage him to obey 1 Cor. 6 and not take this one to court. He not only refused, but he cut off his relationship with me for even bringing up the subject. And, to be sure, it tarnished the reputation of all parties.

Paul says – look – disagreements will happen. But, there are wise people in the church who can help. Either informally through brokering conversations and helping bring about forgiveness OR formally through binding arbitration. But doing this with wise people IN the church is better because of the most important thing – the reputation of Christ among the broader culture. Notice this theme in 1 Corinthians – for all of the church messes, Paul has **two rules of thumb** for a messed up church that he keeps coming back to:

- What is loving?
- What will promote a good reputation to outsiders?

## **Judging Angles**

Now, there is a little tangent tucked into the middle of this text that probably raised some eyebrows when you studied it. "The Lord's people will judge the world." And "Don't you know that you will judge angels?"

OK... anybody looking forward to that? In fact, the Bible gives all kinds of clues that your happily ever after has nothing to do with floating on clouds and becoming angels... nope. We will judge them.

And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their proper dwelling—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. – Jude 1:6

if we endure, we will also reign with him. 2 Timothy 2:12

'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.' Luke 19:17

Jesus says to the saints, "The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne." Rev 3:21

"The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations." Revelation 2:26

These verses should get you to the 'mind blown' position. If you follow Jesus to the end... you will rule WITH him. You will be over cities. You will be judging angels. You will be with Jesus over stuff. So, he says 'practice with the little disputes here on earth, because you have bigtime leadership yet to come. Both in the Millennial kingdom and in the New Heavens and New Earth. Jesus will reign and we will reign with him. Add this to the idea of the new reality being dimensionally bigger than what we are experiencing today... and you have an amazing future planned.

So get ready...life on earth is the warm up act for life in heaven. Practice with minor disputes now, because there is bigger stuff yet to come.

More Sexual immorality...

<sup>9</sup>Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men<sup>10</sup> nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup>And that is what some of you were. But you

were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Now, I want to highlight two things that are controversial in this passage. Because it is not too controversial that sexual immorality or adultery or stealing or swindling is bad. And if I covered much of it last week as well.

But here is where many in the church or many in the culture stop in their tracks: men who have sex with men on the same list as all of the other sins. In our culture, you will get 1000 messages saying Gay sex is moral or it is natural or it is OK if the men are in a committed relationship for every one that says – no, it is actually against God's plan.

And, the scholars and PR agents for the pro-gay movement will even get more savvy in their messaging. One thing that came out this year is a documentary film that claims that the word "homosexual" was inserted into the Biblical text in 1946. In one sense, that is true. It is the first time that the Revised Standard Version used the English word Homosexual. But the New Testament, written in Greek, always had that in there.

Bibles translate the terms as men who have sex with men, homosexuals, male prostitutes, the effeminate, men who pretend they are women, and sodomites – the favorite word before 1946. So what does the Greek actually say?

1 Corinthians 6:11 – Malakos – Passive homosexual partners

Arsenokoites – Active homosexual partners

Friends, Paul just wanted to be sure we were totally clear – both homosexual partners are out of bounds. And to be double clear, the NIV gets it right when they are saying men who have sex with men. Because it is not the temptation or orientation that is immoral, it is acting on the temptation. In fact, there are people here at CCC who are attracted to the same sex, but choose to be celibate or heterosexual marriage – and there is no condemnation. No more than someone who is tempted to adultery, but chooses faithfulness to his spouse.

So, the second controversial thing about this passage is that these people will not inherit the kingdom of God. Because you or I might wonder: wait... I have done some of that – I have been drunk, or slandered or cheated some people or been sexually immoral. Does that mean that I am missing out on heaven?

Yes... and no. I think Paul is saying that the Kingdom of God looks very different than this polluted world. **DIAGRAM HERE.** You see, THIS is all of the stuff that you were

rescued from. And THIS is what you were rescued TO. If you say you trust in Jesus, but you keep living this way, it is a betrayal of your claims. People who live this way are not kingdom people, they are not committed to Jesus as Lord. It is not that these things automatically send you to hell, but they are a reflection that you are living for hell and not living for Jesus.

And this is why Paul lists this list of sins and says "And that is what some of you WERE! BUT you were washed and you were cleansed!" Friends, participating in these behaviors does not condemn you or marginalize you forever. Quite the opposite! Jesus came to rescue you FROM these things and transform you. He did not come to condemn you, but to free you, de-pollute you and make you new. Paul is saying – don't go back to the pigsty, because when you do, you are not living the life of the kingdom, but the polluted life. You are clean so lets stay in the clean!

<sup>15</sup> Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! <sup>16</sup> Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh."<sup>17</sup> But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. <sup>19</sup> Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; <sup>20</sup> you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

When I was in student ministry back in the day, students would often protest against sexual morals. They would say "Why are you so uptight about sex? It is just two body parts rubbing together that feel good – like a handshake but better. Sex is just another physical act!"

- Ask yourself, honestly:
- **if sex is just physical, why is adultery so hard to get over?** If sex is JUST physical why is that one sin so hard to forgive and forget?
- **If sex is JUST physical, why is rape considered so much more psychologically damaging than other forms of violence?**
- **Or, if sex is JUST physical, why is it that so many consider their sexual activity to be their identity?** It's just who I am... they say
- **Or, one more: If sex is just physical, why is it that many people's deepest regrets are sexual?** When **somebody comes to me** and says, "Pastor, I need to talk to somebody, and I've **never told anyone** this before," I know what it's going to be about. It's not usually "I cheated on this test." Or, "I haven't paid my taxes."

It's almost always about some sexual regret that hangs over them like a dark cloud that they can't shake off.

Sex is mystical and powerful and designed by God to spiritually unify us with our partner. It is not just pleasure, it is a spiritual union between two people – designed to be unbroken until death. The rest of culture teaches that the ultimate end of sex is pleasure. If this is the case, then pleasure is the goal and people are used to get there. The Bible teaches that the sex is designed to weld two souls together. The relationship is the goal and pleasure is the side effect. It is the difference between lightning striking randomly and electricity running through a grid.

Paul does not want us to forget: when you trust in JESUS, you unite yourself to him. There is this mystical union in which you are now IN Christ and Christ is IN you. And sex is a picture of the union between Christ and the church. Beautiful, mysterious, pleasurable. In Christ, You have become entangled, unified with him. And when you are sexually unified to a prostitute – or any other kind of Porneia, you actually have a mystical union with darkness and light all at the same time – and this is a formula for disaster.

Music Here

You are a temple of the Holy Spirit – he lives in you. This does not mean you need to have huge workouts and pump up your musculature. No, you have a new resident in that home. The pure and holy one. So, Paul is saying – don't dump sewage in the temple. Your temple was purchased – and at a very high price.

It was the biggest price he could pay – his most valuable asset. His only son. And a contract, not written in ink, but in blood. And the price you are willing to pay for something is an indicator of how much it matters to you. Friends – you matter so much to God that he will change your very identity from polluted to pure. From darkness to light. From isolation to love... to a relationship with Jesus.

God bought you. He paid in full. Body, soul, mind --- he paid a very high price by sending his son to die in your place. Swap-o-rama. The good Jesus for the polluted you. Remember that! You are of immense value to God! He loves you! And he is cashing in pollution for purity. And the filter/sacrifice that makes that possible is Jesus on the cross. He just loves you that much!

Now if you have never crossed over from pollution to purity, God is inviting you. You don't have to qualify, you just say yes. Double prayer – for YES and for PURITY

