

1 Corinthians

Gospel-Centered Living in a Sin-Centered World

Section 2: Purity and the Gospel

Purity in Conflict

1 Corinthians 6:1-11

Introduction

READ PASSAGE:

ILLUS: Just by way of illustration, I wonder if y'all might be able to complete the following for me?

"Call me _____"

"I'm not settling for a small doe, I'm hunting _____"

"Dial 3 _____"

"If they aren't luring us in with billboards, they're enticing us on television ... there are times we need these trained, skilled, and experienced professionals ... but ... our world has become lawsuit crazed, sometimes turning the legal profession into a market-driven industry." (Swindoll, 87)

Each year in the U.S. over 100 million cases are filed in state courts with 400,00 in federal courts (University of Denver)

As of Jan. 1, 2024, the U.S. population is 335 million.

There is a perpetual backlog of court cases and in a country where a Pew Research Center study shows that as of

2020, about 64% of Americans identify as Christian, many of those cases involve people who claim to be believers.

This is not just a problem in the twenty-first century, but we will learn today, it was just as big a problem in the first century. Paul addresses the issue directly and forcefully in this second section of 1 Corinthian focused on Purity and the Gospel. Chapter 5 talked about Purity in the Church and here in the first part of Chapter 6 is Purity in Conflict.

To be clear, what Paul addresses in this passage is civil NOT criminal cases.

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.

ILLUS: Abuse in the church

Yet, just as the Corinthians were doing, the church today has gone the way of culture rather than the words of Christ. Some, if not most of it, is not out of intentionality but ignorance (almost like this passage doesn't even exist). That is why God gives us His Word and tells us to study it and hide it in our heart. The Word we will unpack this morning is a relevant to us today as it was to the Corinthian church in Paul's day.

Not only had the Corinthian church refused to judge the sexual immorality within the church. When they felt something needed to be judged, they turned to the secular courts rather than the Spirit-led church for a verdict.

So, how does the church maintain Purity in Conflict? First, by ...

Understanding Our Position in Christ (1-6)

V1:

1 Corinthians 6:1 (MSG) — 1 And how dare you take each other to court! When you think you have been wronged, does it make any sense to go before a court that knows nothing of God's ways instead of a family of Christians?

“Dare” is a strong word – shocking, unthinkable

That the church would take a “matter” (pragma – pragmatic) before ...

“the unrighteous” – is a comparative word to “saint.” In this case it is not speaking to immorality (though it was present both in and outside the church) it is delineating between the “lost” and the “saved.” A spiritual distinction that we will see later in the passage should make a profound difference in the lives and actions of believers.

“The difference between secular courts and sacred counsel is the difference between the law and grace. The unbelieving legal experts don't understand the Christian life. They don't understand what it means to walk in the Spirit, to look at things from God's perspective, to weigh the temporal against the eternal, and to look out not only for

our own interests, but also for the interests of others.”
(Swindoll, 90)

It is also not suggesting that one cannot receive a fair judgement from a secular court. In fact, Paul himself received such a judgment.

ILLUS: Acts 18:12–16 (NKJV) — 12 When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat, **13** saying, “This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law.” **14** And when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, “If it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked crimes, O Jews, there would be reason why I should bear with you. **15** But if it is a question of words and names and your own law, look to it yourselves; for I do not want to be a judge of such matters.” **16** And he drove them from the judgment seat.

However, Paul is saying that it is unthinkable for believers to take civil matters before a secular court. Why should this be the case? Because of our position in Christ. What is that position?

V2-3:

“Do you not know” – this will be used 6 times in this chapter alone!

That we will judge both the world and angles!

The truth is that we don’t know exactly what this means or how it will play out. We get some hints throughout Scripture.

Matthew 19:28 (NKJV) — 28 So Jesus said to them, “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Revelation 2:26–27a (NKJV) — 26 And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations— **27a** ‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron ...

Jude 6 (NKJV) — 6 And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day;

“If the saints will one day help rule the entire earth, they surely are able to rule themselves within the church now.”
(MacArthur, 138)

The truth is that such judgment will be in accordance to the Word of God and the Spirit’s leadership. These are not things we will only have access to then, but we have access today!

V4:

In fact, these are not just available to some believers, but available to all believers! Notice there is no mention here of pastors or deacons. Paul is saying such is available to all!

“The poorest equipped believer, who seeks the counsel of God’s Word and Spirit, is much more competent to settle disagreements between fellow believers than is the most

highly trained and experienced unbelieving judge who is devoid of divine truth.” (MacArthur, 139)

1 Corinthians 2:14 (NKJV) — 14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

V5-6:

We have seen earlier where Paul was boldly direct to the Corinthian believers but not to shame them.

1 Corinthians 4:14 (NKJV) — 14 I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you.

But this is different, it was to their shame? Why? Because they thought they were so wise.

1 Corinthians 4:10 (NKJV) — 10 We are fools for Christ’s sake, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but we are dishonored!

Yet, in all that wisdom, they couldn’t find even one person who would be wise enough to judge matters of conflict between them!?

Remember, Paul has already referenced how Jesus taught us how to handle conflict within the church in Matthew 18 – one on one, two to three witnesses, and then before the church. However, instead of following God’s Word and trusting the Spirit’s leadership among believers (who are

equipped to judge the world and angels) – they were going before unbelievers.

Purity in Conflict does not come just from Understanding Our Position in Christ, it also requires ...

Walking in the Humility of Christ (7-8)

This is where the real challenge is found. Notice the first thing that Paul says is ...

V7:

Believers who take such matters to a secular court have already lost before they even arrive!

Even for the one who wins the case, both have lost.

John 13:35 (NKJV) — 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

He follows it up with, why are you not humble enough to be wronged and cheated if doing so would maintain unity in the church and our testimony before the world?

It doesn't have to be this way – if believers would just do what is right by each other and submit to conflict resolution as God has commanded. Yet, even if not ...

“Better to lose money or possessions than to lose a brother and lose your testimony as well.” (Wiersbe, 588)

Matthew 5:38–40 (NKJV) — 38 “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ **39** But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. **40** If anyone

wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also.

Yet, how countercultural is this! And how much more so in our context nationally and, even more so, locally. We want to stand up for our rights!

“The attitudes we exhibit while working through the difficult process of reconciliation – that’s where too often we abandon our Christian values and take up worldly vices.” (Swindoll, 93)

“Unfortunately, the Corinthians, and too many Christians today, love money more than they love Christ, the gospel, and the reputation of the church.” (Akin & Merritt, 118)

We must remember – there is a Higher Court!

But as believers among believers, do we really have any rights? We are not our own.

ILLUS: This is not just what Jesus taught, this is what Jesus did!

V8:

Here is the bottom line. A brother may have wronged and cheated you, but when we step outside of God’s Word to take them to a secular court, we are now guilty of the very same thing! The only one who really wins is the devil!

But how are we supposed to do this? How do we maintain Purity in Conflict? Not just by Understanding Our Position in Christ and Walking in the Humility of Christ, but also by ...

Remembering Our Forgiveness in Christ (9-11)

This is the key! Paul moves from the example Jesus provided us to the forgiveness He purchased for us!

Notice where Paul begins ...

V9-10:

“Do you not know”

“Do not be deceived”

Fornicators: sexual immorality of the unmarried

Idolaters: placing anything above God

Adulterers: sexual immorality outside of marriage

Homosexuals: effeminate – term not coined until around 1870 (passive – to include trans, gender reassignment, etc.)

Sodomites: same sex immorality (active)

Thieves: directly stealing what belongs to others

Covetous: desiring what belongs to others

Drunkards: self-explanatory

Revilers: those who destroy with words (gossip, slander, verbal abuse, etc.)

Extortioners: indirectly stealing what belongs to others.

“Do not be deceived” these “will not inherit the kingdom of God”

“Three things are worth noting about this catalogue of wrongdoing. The first is that it ought not to be that controversial ... The second ... is that Paul puts sins we regard as very serious alongside sins which we might think of as fairly trivial ...” (Wilson, 58-59)

Galatians 6:7 (NKJV) — 7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

But I want to be clear, this is in no way saying that believers can't commit such sin. However, it is saying that such sin will not define or be the flow of a believers life. If that is the case, such are deceiving themselves.

Let me explain:

ILLUS: Alabama River Picture

ILLUS: David committed adultery, Peter denied, and Judas stole – but David repented, Peter was restored, Judas rejected. David and Peter's life had some turns toward sin, but the flow of their life was to Jesus. Judas had some turns toward Jesus, but the flow of his life was to sin.

“... The third point is beautiful ...” (Wilson, 58-59)

V11:

“Such were some of you” – it is a reminder of who we were before Christ!

“BUT” – notice the repetition

But you were “Washed” speaks of the new birth

Titus 3:5 (NKJV) — 5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

But you were “Sanctified”

Set apart

But you were “Justified”

Declared righteous

This was accomplished by the finished work of Jesus Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

Yes, this passage is speaking to the specific issue of believer suing other believers. Practically, it not only addresses how believers should handle among themselves, but what counsel believing lawyers should give to those believers seeking to sue each other.

Yet, the issue is much deeper than that. The suing was only a symptom of the greater problem. That is maintaining Purity in Conflict in the church and among believers.

“The motivation is that you want to ‘be who you are’ : to bring your lifestyle in line with the reality of who you are in Christ. You want to inherit the kingdom. You want to live out what God has done in your life.” (Wilson, 59)

It is only possible by:

Understanding Our Position in Christ

Walking in Humility in the Humility of Christ

Remembering Our Forgiveness in Christ