

“Why Not Rather Be Wronged”

1 Cor 6:1-8

Celebrating the Centrality of Christ in the Local Assembly

First Corinthians 5:9-13 tells the local church that we must judge those within the fellowship. We do not judge those outside the fellowship; God judges those outside the fellowship. This provides for us a platform and introduction into chapter 6.

Their failure was two-fold. **First**, they did not bring their disputes to the church to settle (vv. 5, 6). And **second**, they were suing each other. Both were statements of shame and defeat (v. 7).

How am I to understand the passage in our modern context?

Two believers were engaged in a conflict whereby one was being defrauded. The idea behind defrauding is to cheat someone out of something that is not yours. It means to swindle. The word “defraud” as used in 1 Corinthians 6 is found six times in the New Testament (Mk 10:19, 1 Cor 6:7, 8, 7:5, 1 Tm 6:5, Jas 5:4).

Based on the passage there are three elements that need to be considered.

- I. I should never take someone to court in order to get what is not mine.

As a nation we are out of control. And this infectious capacity to gain without work has contaminated the church. Our present situation is really no different than ancient Corinth. They were prone to take any and all to “court” in order to correct any real or imaginary injustice. Because of this the culture was out of control.

There is no question we live in a day and age where personal lawsuits and liability have gone awry. Greed and unethical behavior have reduced us to a nation of pettiness and personal affront. When we speak of inalienable rights, we believe them to be gifts given instead of commodities gained. We are a spiritually bankrupt people. We are immature and insolent in our inability to cope with inconvenience, waiting, and impingement. We deserve it . . . now! There is no sense of humility, teach-ability, and charity.

- II. If a problem exists inside a fellowship that is relational and involves sin I should follow the principles of Matthew 18.

Matthew 18 is the “judicial” system for the church. Matthew 18 only works inside of a local church fellowship.

What are the principles for settling issues between “family” members?

- A. When an issue exists between two individuals, it should be resolved privately and graciously (Mt 18:15).

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- B. If the issue cannot be resolved, then arbitration should be pursued within the fellowship (18:16).
- C. If either one or both refuse to accept the judgment of the arbitrators, then they are to be put outside the fellowship (18:17).
- D. Local assemblies have the “authority” to act as arbitrators and their decision is to be binding on the members of that fellowship (18:18-20).

Part of our difficulty is that we have a low value of the local church and its leadership authority. Today’s religious scene has people changing fellowships all the time. How do we carry out a 1 Corinthians 5 or 6 when people simply pick-up and move down the street if they do not like what they are hearing? If Paul identifies the situations at Corinth worthy of discipline, can you imagine his thoughts concerning today’s believers? We are petty and it is to our shame.

III. God establishes *government* (Rom 13:1ff) to “govern”, not to guarantee.

The government does assist in managing a society marked by order and structure, rule and regulate. Within the Church of God, we no longer have any sense of how we are to regulate and order His people. The passage before us would appear to strongly suggest that as the people of God we are enabled to settle matters of dispute between brethren who are exchanging blows and contentions. Yet, like many actions we, the Church of God, have abdicated our God given mandates and responsibilities to either the world or other agencies outside of the local church.

When King Jesus reigns we will be able to live like the Sermon on the Mount describes in Matthew 5:38-42, when all of our present injustices will be resolved (Mt 5:38-42); but until then God has established government to govern the ungodly (Rom 13:1-4).

In a fellowship filled with a divisive, disgruntled, and disagreeable people, Paul’s exhortation worms its way into their arrogant and haughty attitude. Their pride is to be broken and restoration is to take place. It is only when we exhibit the fruit of the Spirit, the spirit of Christ, that we will have humility, teach-ability, and charity. The way of grace is always the way of peace and rest. May we pray for the embodiment of Christ through our earthen vessels and in our midst as a fellowship. May we live in the triumph of a reigning grace.