

1 CORINTHIANS: MOVING FROM THE CARNAL TO THE SPIRITUAL STATE

Part XI: Counteracting Lawsuits Between Believers In Secular Courts

(1 Corinthians 6:1-8)

I. Introduction

- A. Functioning by means of the sin nature, what we term "carnality," is often a challenge in today's churches.
- B. 1 Corinthians was written to carnal believers (1 Corinthians 3:1-3), and 1 Corinthians 6:1-8 shows how the body is to counter the practice of believers bringing lawsuits against one another in secular courts (as follows):

II. Counteracting Lawsuits Between Believers In Secular Courts, 1 Corinthians 6:1-8.

- A. Due to the negative way bringing lawsuits between believers before the lost hurts their testimony, Paul used strong language in asking, "Dare (*tolmao*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 829) any of you who has a legal matter with another to take it before the unrighteous for judgment and not before the saints?" (U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 589; 1 Cor. 6:1; 10:32-33; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 515)
- B. Paul gave two major reasons why the saints were the proper judges in such disputes in 1 Corinthians 6:2-3:
 1. First, we believers will one day judge the world, so we should judge the smallest matters now, 1 Cor. 6:2.
 2. Second, we will one day judge angels, higher created beings than we currently are, 1 Cor. 6:3a. We must thus be equipped of God by His indwelling Spirit to be able to judge matters of this life, 1 Cor. 6:3b.
- C. Paul then supplied practical advice in solving this problem (as follows), 1 Corinthians 6:4-8:
 1. With biting irony, he urged his readers to take legal disputes between believers that pertain to this life and set up even the least of believers in the church to rule in them, settling them, 1 Corinthians 6:4.
 2. Paul wrote this to shame them, not meaning that they were actually to set up the least of them to judge, but that they select someone in their midst who had the wisdom to make an upright ruling, 1 Corinthians 6:5.
 3. As it was, one brother in Christ was suing another brother before unsaved judges, a terrible situation both as to the Church's testimony and in view of the actual capability of the local church, 1 Corinthians 6:6.
 4. This ungodly practice was causing the Corinthian believers involved in the lawsuits already to suffer "utter defeat" (*ettema*, Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 350) so that they would actually be better before the Lord letting themselves be defrauded (*apostereisthe*, passive voice of *apostereo*, "to deprive, defraud," The Analyt. Grk. Lex. (Zon.), 1972, p. 47) by the other party in the lawsuit versus pressing the charge against him before the unsaved magistrates, 1 Corinthians 6:7a. In letting one's self be defrauded in such a case, he loses only in terms of this life, but not his reward from God in eternity for righteousness! (1 Cor. 6:7b)
 5. As it was, the Corinthians did wrong in hurting their testimony in pressing the lawsuits, defrauding the Church of its good testimony in the process, what only hurt the believers themselves, 1 Corinthians 6:8.
- D. [We also focus additional Scripture advice needed for issues we face in our latter day era (as follows):
 1. Paul predicted that in the latter days of Church History, men would become abusive, and among their vices would be their acting in "treacherous" ways toward others, 2 Timothy 3:1-2, 4a ESV, NIV.
 2. Since we have learned from studying Revelation 3:14-22 in its context that we are in the latter era of Church History, we have witnessed that some professing Christians, aware of Scripture's prohibition against suing other believers and that the Church has no legal power over them, will intentionally and treacherously defraud other believers, confident that the wronged believers won't sue them in response!
 3. 2 Timothy 3:5b calls us to guard ourselves by withdrawing from such people, and here are some ways:
 - a. We should check the record of the dealings of professing believers before we do business with them!
 - b. We should work as independently as we can for our own welfare, 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12. This directive minimizes our risk of becoming vulnerable to those who may treacherously try to wrong us.
 - c. Functioning in financial independence may also mean requiring half of the payment for goods and services be paid before the work is done, and that all business transactions involve written records.]
- E. Paul did not counter the believer's suing an unsaved party, for if the unsaved is a wrongdoer, the lawsuit does not hurt the local church's testimony. Only if the Christian testimony is harmed should the suit not be brought!

Lesson: *Believers should not sue believers in secular courts, for it harms the local church's testimony and violates the whole principle that believers will one day judge the world and angels. A believer is wise not to deal with untrustworthy believers, but if he is wronged by one, he must let himself be defrauded for God's eternal reward.*

Application: (1) *May we not go to court against fellow believers, but let ourselves be defrauded for Christ's sake.*
(2) *May we live as wisely and as independently as we can to minimize exposure to treacherous people and lawsuits.*