

Series: 1 Cor
Title: Forgive the Wrong
Text: 1 Cor 6: 1-8
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In 1 Corinthians 6, we come to the next problem in the Corinthian church. When they had differences, they were taking one another—brethren for whom Christ died—to court—suing one another. By the Spirit of God, Paul writes,

1 Corinthians 6: 1: Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? 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? 3: Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? 4: If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. 5: 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? 6: But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. 7: 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? 8: Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that *your* brethren.

Sadly, differences do arise between God's saints which are difficult to settle. We are talking about things serious to each believer involved. Wrongs have been committed. Feelings are hurt; passions are high.

What are believers to do in such cases? Saints at Corinth were literally taking one another to court, suing one another—asking unjust, unbelieving judges to judge them and settle their differences—before the unbelieving world. Notice, Paul did not ask the specifics of who did what to whom. That is irrelevant. This is God's word to every saint on this subject. Whatever God says is what we are to do.

When a difference arises between two believers, God says graciously, lovingly settle the matter privately between ourselves and forgive.

DO NOT GO TO COURT

Saints should never take believers to court. It is because unjust judges have no spiritual discernment—**1 Corinthians 6: 1: Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?**

Now, understand, this is not a condemnation of using a court of law. When self-righteous, religious men unjustly charged the apostle Paul, he appealed to Caesar. If a worldly man unjustly charges a believer, it is not a sin for a believer to seek justice from a heathen judge. We should not do so quickly; only as a last resort.

Yet, if God's saints have a disagreement between themselves, it is a sin and a disgrace for them to sue one another in a court of law. Paul says, "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? An unjust judge is an unregenerate judge, a natural man. Natural men have no spiritual discernment of God's word. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor 2: 14)

A judge in a civil court of law has one responsibility: to uphold the law of the land. A civil judge deals in justice only—"An eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth." It is not his job to deal in spiritual discernment: no love, no grace, no mercy, only justice. So God says to you who are saints, "Dare any of you having a matter against another" take your brother to law, to be dealt with in such a manner! No! Never take a fellow believer to court.

GO TO FELLOW SAINTS

If a matter cannot be settled between brethren then it should be taken to fellow saints because saints have spiritual discernment—**1 Corinthians 6: 2: Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?...3: Know ye not that we shall judge angels?**

The point is that God's saints are not undiscerning judges. We have been born of God and so we are given spiritual discernment. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God:...But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man." (1 Cor 2: 14-15)

God's saints are spiritual—given spiritual discernment by the Spirit of God. Therefore, God saints judge by the word of God, by God-given spiritual discernment, by God-given faith in Christ.

God saints are fit to judge because we judge (or condemn) this world and fallen angels through faith in Christ because God has given us spiritual discernment to believe God's word and heed God's word. We see it in Noah, for example.

Hebrews 11: 7: By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

We know all judgment belongs to the Son. Christ said, “the Father has committed all judgment unto the Son that all men should honor the Son as they honor the Father.” (Jn 5: 22) When Christ come to execute judgment on this world, his saints will be with him. And like Noah, it will be through faith in Christ, that we will condemn this world.

Jude 14: ...Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, 15: To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard *speeches* which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

By God-given discernment, through God-given faith in Christ, the saints judge the deeds of all flesh to be ungodly, ours included—while we judge Christ deeds to be righteousness and our only righteousness. By God-given discernment, through God-given faith in Christ, we judge the speeches of ungodly men to be ungodly because they are not according to God’s word, they are against Christ—while we judge God’s word holy and true of Christ.

So the Spirit of God teaches us to value the judgment of our fellow saint above an unjust, undiscerning civil judge—**1 Corinthians 6: 2:..if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?...3:...things that pertain to this life? 4: If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.**

Most agree this is a rebuke and should read, “If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, why do ye set them to judge—those unjust judges—who are despised by the church?” Paul says, “**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?**” (1 Cor 6: 6) But taking verse 4 as it reads, it tells us that even the least esteemed of God’s saints has more spiritual discernment to judge more wisely than an unregenerate civil judge even if he is in the highest court of the land. Therefore, we would be far wiser to appeal to God’s saints to judge matters between God’s saints.

Brethren, if we cannot settle a matter, seek out a wise man among God’s saints. God’s saints use spiritual discernment to judge: in love and mercy, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, reminding us to forgive one another as God has forgiven you for Christ’s sake, and reminding us it is most important for us to honor Christ in all that we do.

Also, remember this. When a fellow saint judges the matter let it be settled. Make whatever restitution, whatever concessions must be made to let the matter be settled. Heed the judgment and do not be unreasonable with each other. Treat one another as what you are, saints of God, for whom Christ laid down his life. God’s honor is far more important than our hurt feelings and how we may have been wronged!

BEFORE UNBELIEVERS

Another reason saints should not take one another to court is because it gives the unbelieving world cause to speak evil of us—**1 Corinthians 6: 6 But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers.**

Naturally speaking, if a child in a family gives those in the community cause to speak evil then that child dishonors the whole household including father, mother, brothers and sisters.

The same is true of a child of God. This is God’s household. The word of God teaches God’s saints to walk honorably before this world “that the word of God be not blasphemed.” “That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.” Paul told Timothy, “give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.” (Ti 2: 5, 10; 1 Tim 5: 14)

Titus 2: 7: In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine *shewing* uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, 8: Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

Our motive, our constraint, is whose we are, what we are and how?

Whose we are? God’s saints are not your own. You are a chosen child of God; you are God’s purchased possession; you belong to God. Worldly men say things like, “I’m my own man. No one can tell me what to do!” That is not so if you are one of God’s saints. Whose are we? “Ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” (1 Cor 6: 19-20)

What are we? Scripture declares that God’s saints are redeemed from the curse of the law, justified, righteous; we are sanctified; we are complete in Christ; we are saved from our sins; we are the child of God our Father.

“Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God.” (1 Jn 2: 1)

How is all this freely given to us? It is all by God’s free electing grace, by the price of God’s own Son, the precious blood of Christ, by being born of God the Holy Spirit. We had absolutely nothing to do with it.

Is this motive enough to make you want to honor God? Is this constraint enough to make you desire to give this unbelieving world no cause to speak reproachfully of our God, of our brethren, of our gospel? This is why our actions before this world are so important! A brother should never go against brother, especially before unbelievers.

THE BEST WAY

There is even a better way to settle differences between saints. This is the best way of all—**1 Corinthians 6: 7: 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?**

My brother may have committed a wrong against me. But if I take him to law, rather than forgiving them the wrong then I am committing a wrong and I am defrauding—**1 Corinthians 6: 8: Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.**

Believer, think of the sins we have committed against holy God! Let me ask myself, “Has my brother done anything nearly as offensive as what I have done to holy God?” And did God make his people suffer the justice of his offended law which we owed him? No! God gave his only begotten Son—his only begotten Son. Christ bore our sin in our place. He was made a curse for us, “My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me!” By taking our wrong, our defrauding, and our judgment, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law.

Now, God says to you believer, “For Christ’s sake, I forgive you. I remember your sins no more!” In fact, God goes further. He now says, “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? *It is* God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” (Ro 8:33-34)

Now, whatever my brother has done against me, it is also against God. Yet, for Christ’s sake, God has forgiven him, the same as God has forgiven me. Shall I now take my brother to a lesser law whom God has delivered from so great a law? Shall God forgive him for Christ’s sake and shall not I forgive him for the sake of Christ?

But what if my brother has trespassed many times against me? What if he has wronged me greatly? How many times should I forgive him? For how many wrongs should I forgive him? The apostle Peter asked our Master that question and Christ said that we are to forgive our brethren without limit. (Mt 18: 21-22) Then Christ gave this parable. God give us grace to read this and heed this most important warning. Christ said,

Matthew 18: 23: Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. 24: And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. 25: But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. 26: The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. 27: Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. 28: But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took *him* by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. 29: And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. 30: And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. 31: So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. 32: Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: 33: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? 34: And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. 35: So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Our Lord and Master has brought his saints under a different rule. It is the rule of love and mercy. God says to you believer, “Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather...be defrauded?” Here is the rule Christ said we are under. He gives us grace to do this. If we will not, it is only our sinful, rebellious, God-hating flesh. But Christ will not allow that rebel to reign in his child. He gives more grace. He said,

Matthew 5: 38: Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: 39: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40: And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have *thy* cloke also.

Has a brother offended you? Do you insist he meet all your demands? Do you insist you will punish him by taking that which is greatest from him? Do you insist on strict justice? Do you want God to give you strict justice or do you want mercy? If we insist on strict justice and we never come to repentance then we are not children of God and we shall surely receive strict justice from God. God commands his child, "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment." (Jas 2:12-13) "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (Eph 4: 32)

Amen!