

First Corinthians 6:1-20

Not only is the church failing to judge those inside the church (chapter 5) they are also going outside the church to ask the world to judge matters inside the church.

In this case there are two people in the church with a disagreement or an issue that needs outside help to resolve. Apparently church member A has been wronged by church member B. The situation is not clear since very little is revealed about the case.

Two factors need to be considered:

1. If the lawsuit involved money, material or property the two individuals involved were wealthy and socially upper class.
2. Then, if they were wealthy and leaders among the Corinthian culture they were probably also leaders in the church.

Paul initially does not advise them not to seek judgment but to seek judgment from the church. Later Paul addresses the issue of “being wronged” and “causing the wrong” as inappropriate.

In verses 1-11 Paul does little explaining.

Instead he indicates he is shocked by the way they are handling the situation and uses:

- Rhetorical questions (2-4, 5-6, 7)
- Sarcasm (5)
- Threats (8-11)

Paul is upset ultimately by two things beside the court action itself:

1. The Corinthians have such a shallow or small understanding of who they are in Christ.
2. The church’s testimony to the world is completely destroyed.

Interestingly we see once again that eschatology plays into real world situations.

Paul uses eschatological information to

1. formulate his values
2. arrive at his decision
3. defend his conclusion

POINT: Eschatology is not trivial information but is foundational in determining our values, decisions and confidence.

6:1

The failure is addressed not only at the two individuals but at the church itself for not handling the situation.

The first word in the Greek sentence is *τολμα* “tolma” and is translated “dare”

“Dare” is in the present tense which means the lawsuit was currently in process.

<i>Τολμα</i>	<i>τις</i>	<i>ὑμων</i>
Dare	anyone	of you

Paul is stating his shock at their ridiculous logic.

“has a dispute” is *πραγμα* “pragma” which is a technical term for a lawsuit or legal action.

κρινω “krino” is in middle voice allowing it to mean “going to law”, “bringing something for judgment.”

“Saints” is used in contrast with “Ungodly”.

“Ungodly” is the word $\alpha\delta\iota\kappa\omega\nu$ “adikon” meaning “unrighteous ones.”

It is used by Paul in other places to refer to those who break God’s law.

“Ungodly” does not mean they were corrupt and worthless any more than calling the Corinthians “saints” meant they were moral, righteous and lived godly lives. These are positional terms focused on which kingdom the two groups belonged to.

Paul himself used the “ungodly” Roman court system himself and received just treatment on several occasions. (Acts 16:37-39; Acts 25:10-12; Paul was later released)

Eschatologically this whole situation is an absurdity to Paul.

The saints will one day judge and rule the world and the present system will be removed.

Yet, the Corinthians are actually going to the very world system that they will judge someday and seeking a judgment on themselves.

6:2

Judge

1. “I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. . . It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time.” Wait till the Lord comes.” (1 Corinthians 4:3-5)
 - a. Here “**Judge**” is $\alpha\nu\alpha\kappa\rho\iota\nu\omega$ “anakrino”. It means to question, to examine, to interrogate, used of a judicial examination before the final verdict is given.
2. “What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. ‘Expel the wicked man from among you.’” (1 Corinthians 5:12-13)
 - a. Here “**Judge**” is $\kappa\rho\iota\nu\omega$ “krino” and it means to judge.
3. “Dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels?” (1 Corinthians 6:1-3)
 - a. Here “**Judge**” is $\kappa\rho\iota\nu\omega$ “krino” and it means to judge.

Now but not yet – Paul writes as though the future realities are the conditions upon which the church operates.

Two questions are here and they point to two different things.

1. “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?”
 - a. This is directed at the church and their failure to function properly in light of who God is, who they are and what the future will bring.
2. “Are you not competent to judge trivial cases?”
 - a. The emphasis here is on how trivial this lawsuit is.
 - i. In light of eschatology this case and the lawsuit are really not that big of a deal
 - ii. Also, this may refer to the issue involved in the court case. The issue itself may have been trivial.

6:3

“Judge angels”

We are going to be so involved in God’s judgment of the world that we will even be involved in the final judgment of angels who have rebelled against God.

- Daniel 7:9, 10 “Thrones were set in place . . . The court was seated, and the books were opened.”
- Matthew 19:28 “Jesus said to them, ‘I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’”
- 2 Timothy 2:12 “If we endure, we will also reign with him.”
- Revelation 3:21 “To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne.”
- Revelation 20:4-5 “I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. . . They came to live and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”
- Revelation 22:5 “And they will reign for ever and ever.”

POINT: If we expect that we are going to judge angels and situations that are beyond our vision and understanding someday in the future, then it is required of us to demonstrate our ability to judge today in situations that we can see and understand.

6:4

The challenge in understanding this verse is here: The verb “appoint” (kathizete)?

1. Is it a sarcastic imperative (a command belittling the Corinthians)?
2. Is it an indicative mood (mood of reality) used in a rhetorical question (sincerely stating the obvious)?

6:5

In 1 Corinthians 4:14 Paul clearly says “I am not writing this to shame you but to warn you” when he addressed the issue of the Corinthians judging him and considering themselves kings.

Now Paul clearly says, “I say this to shame you.”

The church’s failure to act in this situation shames the church itself.

What Paul says next ties the issues of this book together.

Remember the Corinthians think they have “wisdom” (sophia) and that they are a superior group.

Their arrogance and pride has puffed them up.

Paul then asks this superior group of wise spiritual people:

“Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers?”

This is laced with sarcasm.

These “wise” and “super spiritual” believers have to go to the fallen world system.

The point is again they are arrogant and out of step with God’s reality.

6:6

Christian brothers should be able to find another Christian brother to help navigate through their dispute.

1. Tone of sarcasm since the Corinthians are “so wise” that they can ignore Paul.
2. Focus on the damaged testimony to the unbeliever who is to have God’s character and multifaceted wisdom manifested to them through the church.

6:7

Paul addresses the two men. Both men are wrong.

1. Already they are defeated no matter who wins the case in court.
2. The very fact you are in court means you lost the bigger issue.

The man (**church member A**) who is taking the other man (**church member B**) to court is challenged in this verse

6:8

The man (**church member B**) who did the defrauding or cheating that caused **church member A** to want the courts to rectify the wrong is now warned.

Paul then extends the warning to all the wicked in the church.

6:9

The list of sins is the same as 1 Cor. 5:10 (of the world) but Paul adds four more.

Sexually immoral and idolaters are from 5:10

Four new sins are listed (3 of them sexual):

1. Adulterers
2. male prostitutes “malakoi” means “soft” and “effeminate”. This would refer to the effeminate call boy in a relationship.
3. homosexual offenders “arsenokoitai” combination of the words for “male” (arseno) and “intercourse” (koitai). The word “koitai” is the vulgar slang word for sexual intercourse. This word was seldom found in literature because authors were reluctant to use it. This would refer to the partner with the callboy.
4. Thieves - Thieves here is a reference to the court cases.

This list fits with the churches problems in chapter 5 and 6.

First Corinthians 6:12-19

This next section focuses on sexual immorality.

It connects to the present argument by returning to the topic that began in 5:1 with Paul saying, “It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you.”

As Paul spoke to the church about how to deal with the immoral brother of 5:1-8 he also began to address the church on their responsibility to judge those in the church.

This led to 6:1-7 where the church not only had failed to judge those inside the church but now Paul gives an example of the church having gone to the world to ask for the world’s judgment on members of the church. The men involved with this are listed as cheating, doing wrong and considered thieves, greedy slanderers and swindlers.

This type of people are listed and compared with the sexually immoral in 6:9-12.

By mentioning the sexually immoral Paul has returned to his theme that began in 5:1.

Process for the Flow of the Letter:

1. Sexually immoral man 5:1-8
2. Failure of church to judge the situation properly 5:9-12
3. Church has gone to the world to have a situation judged 6:1-7
4. Members of the church are corrupt with cheating, deceiving, etc. 6:8-9
5. Cheating is listed along with sexual immorality 6:9-11
6. Paul returns to sexual sins in 6:12-20
7. This leads to the issue of marriage that begins in 7:1

Two words dominate the next 7 verses:

1. porneia (πορνεία) (or a form) of it 5 times
2. soma (σώμα) “body” 8 times

Paul is going to quote and use some of the Corinthians own statements in these verses.

The Corinthians have separated the body from the spiritual life.
Thus, they can go to prostitutes without having any effect on their spiritual life.

The Corinthians had a serious misconception of the spiritual life and spiritual power.

They thought that since they were on a higher spiritual plane the physical life could not affect them.

This is more than an ethical question. The truth of the gospel is at stake.

They had false views of:

1. Freedom in Christ (“Everything is permissible”)
2. The body (God will destroy the body)

Paul’s argument against their false spiritual views:

1. Paul argues against their false views
 - a. 6:12 – argues against their distortion of Christian freedom
 - b. 6:13-14 – argues against their misunderstanding of the body
2. Paul builds on the truth of this doctrinal statement: “The body is meant for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.” (Point: You cannot separate the spiritual from the physical.)
 - a. Sex unifies a man with a woman in his body.
 - b. Salvation unifies a man with the Lord in his spirit
 - c. But, a man is both the body and the spirit. They are not divided.
 - d. Thus, a prostitute has joined unified with the same man as the Lord has.
3. Sexual immorality is wrong because it is a sin against the body of a man who is meant for the Lord.

A very important point in these verses concerns the human body.

1. The body is part of a man forever.
2. The body was made by God and is for the Lord.
3. The body should not be abused, rejected, or subdued to attain salvation.
4. Control of the body should not be ignored nor is the body immaterial to salvation.

6:12

Paul attacks their theology first, not their behavior.

- If you have a messed up theology you will have messed up behavior.
- So, if you start with correct theology you are heading in the correct direction.
- And, that direction is in the direction the Holy Spirit is leading you as sons of God which is spiritual growth and conformity into the image of Jesus, the Son of God