

Christians Gone Wild!
1st Corinthians, week 12
Changed by Jesus (1 Corinthians 6:1–11)
March 26, 2006
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Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived...

1 Corinthians 6:9

Ours is an incredibly litigious society. Somewhere between 80 and 90 million lawsuits are filed in our nation each year—roughly 150 per minute. Some 70 percent of the world's lawyers are in the United States and an additional 50,000 lawyers are added each year. While law is certainly an honorable profession, the sad truth is that many lawyers simply make money by filing frivolous lawsuits and seeking to essentially extort the wealthy into settlements to avoid the high cost of a trial. Things were not much different in Paul's day; Greece, home of the world's first democracy, had a bustling court system. The question Paul seeks to address on this issue is how a Christian should relate to the secular court.

Christians Should Resolve Trivial Disputes

¹If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? ²Do 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? ³Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! ⁴Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church! ⁵I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers?

Paul says that trivial cases should be handled within the church by appointed impartial people who love God and His justice. The distinction between trivial and weighty matters in our day is marked by the distinction between civil law (private disputes among individuals) and criminal law (criminal offenses, including treason and murder). Therefore, Christians are welcome to pursue justice on civil matters if they believe they have been wronged and are to do so within the church if at all possible.

A few clarifying points need to be made on this matter as these verses have been subject to widespread misuse:

- Paul is referring to more trivial matters. Larger matters are more fit for the secular courts (Romans 13:1–7).
- Paul understands that some things needing judgment are not even considered improper outside of the church (e.g., fornication, adultery, gossip, heresy).
- Paul does not permit Christians and their churches to avoid disclosing a crime to the secular authorities (Romans 13:1–7).

- Paul does not forbid a Christian from filing a suit against a non-Christian (Romans 13:1–7).
- Paul doesn't say that a Christian can never sue another Christian, but that an effort must be made to resolve it outside of secular court (Romans 13:1–7).

Christians Should Do What is Best for the Gospel

⁶But instead, one brother goes to law against another—and this in front of unbelievers! ⁷The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?⁸ Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers.

Any Christian considering bringing a charge against another Christian must be careful not to harm the reputation of the gospel in the eyes of non-Christians. In some instances it may be more preferable to suffer loss than to publicly harm the reputation of Jesus. Christians must never seek to use frivolous litigation as a way to accumulate wealth or power.

Christians Should Live for the Final Judgment

⁹Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders ¹⁰nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

While justice is to be pursued in this life, the sad truth is that ultimate and perfect justice will not come until the Day of Judgment by Jesus at the end of time. On that day those who habitually practice sin will be exposed for who they are—unbelieving non-Christians who got their rewards on earth only to spend their eternity in hell, locked outside of God's kingdom.

Christians Experience Transformation

¹¹And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Because of Jesus, we do not need to accept ourselves for who we are; we can be transformed into someone else. Thus, true Christians are *former* perverts, homosexuals (also see Genesis 19:1–29 cf. Jude 1:7; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:26–27; 1 Timothy 1:9–10), adulterers, thieves, addicts, swindlers, liars, etc. Jesus and the power of the Spirit transform them so they do not need constant judgment from Christian or secular courts because they live a repentant life rather than a life of ongoing habitual sin.

Verses for next week: 1 Corinthians 15:12–34