

Why Not Rather Suffer Wrong?

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Preacher: Colin Horne

[0 : 00] 1 Corinthians 6. We're going to be reading from verse 1 to 11.

! Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?

And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life?

So if you have such cases, why do you lay them before them who have no standing in the church? I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers?

But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers? To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong?

[1 : 18] Why not rather be defrauded? But you yourselves wrong and defraud, even your own brothers. Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?

Do not be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

And such were some of you. 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.

Amen. Let's hear the word of God preached. Many of us have to-do lists. Many of us would use apps, perhaps, to keep track of what we have to do for that day.

Some of us, the good old-fashioned way, using pen and paper, checking off or crossing off our to-do lists. Well, Paul tonight is in the midst of something of a to-do list with this letter.

[2 : 31] 1 Corinthians. He has been addressing various problems in the church. He has heard of problems from various sources. Some problems in the church, or even just questions in the church, coming from the church itself, writing to him with those questions.

Other things brought to his attention by Chloe's household. Someone particular in the church, concerned for the church, writing to Paul or speaking to Paul as well.

So Paul has been checking off his to-do list in this letter. Matters that he needs to address with this church. We saw last week that he had a matter to address concerning how we should handle unrepentant sin in the local church.

That was the topic of chapter 5. A very practical topic. Well, now we come to chapter 6, and we're given another practical topic that Paul wants to address.

How should we as Christians handle disputes with one another? So as we come to this text, we're going to see a very clear flow of thought from Paul.

[3 : 45] As he answers this question for us. How should we as Christians handle disputes with one another? So we can break down Paul's flow of thought into three headings. The problem stated, the logic explained, and the reminder given.

So let's look first at the problem stated, and it's right up front, just verse 1. When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints?

So we see the problem here. Christians are suing each other in the civil courts over grievances. And it's very important that we see this is the specific problem that Paul is addressing.

Some have taken this passage to mean that Christians can never, under any circumstances, file lawsuits. Or that Christians can never go to the civil authorities.

Others have, in response to that false conclusion, swung the pendulum in the opposite direction, as often happens. And they say, Christians need to go to the civil authorities right away with anything and everything.

[5 : 00] And we think of things that we should go to the civil authorities about. We've heard of cover-ups happening in the church, or the church trying to handle things internally, instead of going to those civil authorities.

So what is Paul talking about here? He's talking about grievances. Or maybe your translation says, a dispute. He'll say later, matters pertaining to this life.

He speaks later of being wronged or defrauded. So these are civil matters involving perhaps suffering financial loss.

Maybe suffering the loss of property. Paul is talking more so about situations like where a Christian hires another Christian to do some work on his house, and the job goes sideways.

Or, a real-life example, when I was in high school, I threw my car into reverse in a parking lot. So did the lady across the aisle from me. And at five miles an hour, we ran into each other.

[6 : 04] We got out of our cars. I'm not sure that she was a Christian, but we both recognized our fault. We agreed to go our separate ways and deal with the damage ourselves. But if I had thought that she was at fault, And if she had thought, no, you are at fault, that's the kind of situation that Paul is saying, work this out as Christians without going to the civil authorities.

It's perhaps an interpersonal conflict. It's a personal grievance involving money or possessions. So these aren't certain things.

These aren't especially criminal matters. Perhaps violence against someone has been committed, or someone's been harmed in some way. For those situations, we want to be very clear.

Our guide is not 1 Corinthians 6. That is not our text when those situations arise. God has given us another text for criminal situations.

It's Romans 13, where we are reminded that God has put civil authorities in place to be a terror to bad conduct.

[7 : 14] So when it comes to matters of sin, they are codified in the laws of our land. Well, we submit to those laws and to the civil authorities who uphold those laws.

God himself says in Romans 13, they've been appointed by him for this purpose. So if a crime has been committed for the sake of that victim, for the sake of future victims, we should be going to the civil authorities.

That's all in Romans 13. That's the blueprint for handling criminal offenses. Now here in 1 Corinthians 6, we have a different blueprint. One for handling civil disputes when they arise.

Issues that if you went to the police about them, the police would say, well, you need to go to court about that. They wouldn't tell you, we're going to handcuff this person on the spot. So those are the kinds of situations that Paul is talking about here.

We need to recognize that difference. Criminal offenses, civil matters, civil disputes. We also need to recognize that Paul is specifically addressing disputes between individual professing Christians.

[8 : 25] He isn't addressing whether Christians can or should bring lawsuits, perhaps against businesses or government entities or lawsuits even involving insurance companies.

Wisdom is needed in working out those situations. I think the basic principles of this passage continue to hold true no matter what situation we may find involving the courts.

Christians shouldn't be quick to go to the courts if we can avoid it. But there are times that perhaps it's right to go. Perhaps going to court may involve protecting others or safeguarding others from future wrongs.

Perhaps there was malpractice and going to court may bring it to light in a way that serves the good of others. Or going to court may preserve rights and resources that allow us to minister to others or to serve others.

You go to court so you can continue a good work. Again, wisdom is needed in whether going to court is best in those situations.

[9 : 33] And those aren't the situations that Paul is addressing here. Now, one other possible specific situation might come to our minds. That of divorce.

We need to recognize that Paul is going to address marriage and divorce very clearly for us in chapter 7. So I am not punting on the matter of divorce, but Paul is going to bring it up himself.

And so we're going to wait to see what he has to say until chapter 7. Chapter 6 really is something of the lead-in to that teaching. And as we look at chapter 7 over and over, we're going to look back at chapter 6.

So here in chapter 6, Paul is speaking very strongly. Paul, as you could hear from the reading of God's Word, he is not making any concessions.

He's not prefacing anything that he says to lessen the blow. He is hitting us hard in talking about brothers and sisters dragging each other into court.

[10 : 37] Bringing each other before whom? Before the ungodly. Before unbelievers. And Paul is saying that should be a ridiculous idea.

A ridiculous thought. What's the word that Paul uses? Dare. Dare we do that? Is that really what we're thinking is the solution to our dispute?

Going to court before unbelievers. We have the saints to help us. We have brothers and sisters in the body. That is part of the body life.

Working through our differences together. Paul speaks to this in Colossians 3, verse 13, when he says that we're to be bearing with one another. If one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other, as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

So the sad but true reality is, even as Christians, we wrong one another. We're still dealing with remaining sin. And as long as there's sin in the world, conflict will follow, even among Christians.

[11 : 48] So the question is, how do we work through that conflict? And we see here, it's not in the ways that the church in Corinth was.

We don't take our problems to unbelievers and expect them to help us. So why not? Well, that's the logic that Paul now spends the majority of this passage explaining.

The logic behind this problem. And we see that logic explained in verses 2 through 8. Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world?

And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more than matters pertaining to this life?

So if you have cases, have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church? I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers, but brother goes to law against brother and that before unbelievers?

[12 : 57] To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? But you yourselves wrong and defraud, even your own brothers.

So let's break down Paul's logic together. In a word, he is saying, we should be above doing this. We should be able to work out these kinds of things in the church.

And he gives us three reasons in these verses. I have John MacArthur to thank for some of the terms here. Three reasons. One involves the rank of the church.

Another involves the reputation of Christ. And the third involves the right attitude of the Christian. So rank, reputation, and right attitude.

Let's consider the rank of the church. The argument is this. One day, we'll be given great responsibility in the life to come to judge the world and to judge angels even.

[14 : 02] Now that's a crazy thought. Maybe that's a thought that we don't think very often. Maybe that's a thought that we haven't considered often even from what God says about it.

But it's a biblical thought. Jesus, in Matthew 19, 28, he said this to his disciples. Truly I tell you, 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.

Now, while Jesus isn't talking about the world or angels here, he certainly is talking about his followers sitting with him, joining with him in judgment.

In another of Paul's letters, 2 Timothy 2, 12, we read this small, short phrase, if we endure, we will also reign with him. That's Jesus.

We'll reign with Jesus. And in Revelation 3, 21, Jesus gives this striking promise. The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.

[15 : 23] So in that sitting on his throne, it's also implying a rule, a reign with authority granted. So Paul is simply spelling out more clearly what that authority is.

To judge the world and to judge angels. Now some think Paul is talking about good angels. So when he says we judge them, it means more that we rule over them with authority.

That authority over angels is given to us. Perhaps that's what he has in mind. Could also be that he's talking about fallen angels. He's talking about demons.

We have biblical support for recognizing the judgment of those angels. We read in the book of Jude that they are angels who are kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day.

Well, who will be the judge on that great day? Jesus will. And if we understand Paul to be talking about evil angels here, well then we will be there with Jesus. Not just as these casual observers, but in some way participating in that judgment as we are sitting with him on his throne.

[16 : 39] So if that is our future, seated with Christ on his throne, judging angels, judging the world, why now would we ask the world to sit in judgment over us?

Why are we going to the world and saying, please, render a verdict for us when one day we will be involved with Christ as he, the judge, renders his verdicts for the world?

We'll be with him in that. We'll have some measure of authority in that. And yet now we're going to hand that authority over to the very world that will be judged?

That just doesn't make sense. As Paul says in verse 2, do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And additionally, another question in verse 2, and if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases?

Now by that, I don't think that Paul means there's a difference between, say, trivial cases and significant cases. As though he's saying, you know, you guys could handle the small cases, but when we get to the big cases, well, that's another matter.

[17 : 55] No, I think Paul is making a distinction here between cases in this life, trivial cases, and cases in the life to come.

Paul is saying, one day you'll be involved in these heavenly cases as the world is judged, as angels are judged at the end of the age. So you can't figure out how to handle earthly cases now?

Well, they are far less significant than the cases you'll be involved in one day. These are matters pertaining to this life. You're qualified to resolve these kinds of disputes in the church.

You should be able to do this. One day you'll judge the world. One day you'll judge angels. You can work out your differences in this life in the church.

So don't go to the courts. Don't outsource judgments to them. You're capable of handling them yourselves. So that's the first reason according to the logic of Paul for why we shouldn't take each other to court.

[18 : 58] It's the rank of the church. That was verses 2-4. Well, now we see the second reason. We see the reputation of Christ in verses 5-6. Paul is arguing here that we ought not to be airing our dirty laundry before a watching, unbelieving world.

And that's what we're doing if we go to court. And so rightly so, we should feel ashamed if we're standing in court as two Christians and the world is seeing our complaints on full display.

What did Jesus say? By this, all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.

So what does it communicate to all people if we have complaints against one another? Just the opposite. What are we doing there?

We're dragging the name of Christ through the mud by our inability to love one another. Pointing fingers at each other and accusing each other and trying to persuade the court to take our side and not theirs.

[20 : 12] As Paul says in verse 6, brother going to law against brother and that before unbelievers. Or your translation might say in front of unbelievers.

That's getting at the reputation of the church. And the church is the bride of Christ. And so it is marring his reputation. We dishonor him.

So that's the second reason that we shouldn't go to court. And now the third reason. The right attitude of the Christian. We see this in verses 7 and 8. If we have the right attitude, we will have no reason to go to court.

Paul is saying it shouldn't be that hard to let go of things in this life. And if it is that hard, it's because our priorities are out of line.

We should be willing to lose money or possessions in this life. We should be willing to part with those kinds of things even if it's not just.

[21 : 18] Even if there's a case for why our brother or sister is in the wrong. It just shouldn't matter that much to us. Those kinds of things matters pertaining to this life.

Who is it that does care about those things? Who is it that does care deeply about those kinds of things? Unbelievers do.

Unbelievers care about all of those kinds of things in this life because they are blind to anything else that is to come.

They only think in terms of matters pertaining to this life. What else is there in their mind? They're going to claw and they're going to scratch for whatever they can get.

So we shouldn't be like that because we are not spiritually blind as they are. We've been given by the grace of God eyes to see that there is far more to reality than just what we can gain in this life.

[22 : 20] And so Paul is saying shame on us if we have forgotten what should take first priority. Suffer wrong. Let yourself be defrauded.

Money and possessions just shouldn't matter that much to us. We should let those things go. And then here's some helpful motivation. Paul doesn't even address it here but elsewhere we've seen this in our men's study together.

What do we have awaiting us? Oh, we have a heavenly inheritance awaiting us. 1 Peter says we have an inheritance that is imperishable undefiled and unfading kept in heaven for us who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation to be revealed in the last time.

So that inheritance is ours and it's kept for us in heaven. And Peter says that we are being guarded and you know if we are being guarded well that inheritance it's being kept for us it's protected it's guarded as well.

There's no chance of anyone ripping that from us and that inheritance is better than anything that we could have in this life. So if something is ripped from us now by a brother or a sister okay look what's to come.

[23 : 50] If we've been defrauded perhaps now by a brother or a sister okay have you been defrauded by God? Not at all. Not defrauded by Him.

Now it's obviously never easy to be wronged. It's painful. It's frustrating. But going to court with a brother no less over something that is pertaining to this life God's Word is telling us that's not the answer.

It's backwards. It's counterproductive actually. Let's think about this together. Let's just play out the scenario to its logical conclusion. What would happen if we ignored 1 Corinthians 6 and decided you know what we're going to court.

You and I brother we just can't compromise. We can't come to an agreement. We can't work it out in the church with our pastors or other brothers as mediators so we're going to court.

Okay. Now what? If they take that grievance to the court and the court rules in favor of one brother against the other and it will because that is what the court sets out to do that's its job someone is going to come out the winner someone is going to come out the loser.

[25 : 08] The brother who lost likely isn't going to say oh I see it now I was wrong you're right I'm glad we did this whole court thing so that we could work through it it's opened my eyes to the truth.

No instead what have we done? Put a stumbling block in his way. Now he's bitter he's angry he's perhaps even humiliated and embarrassed by the public spectacle of it all.

The court doesn't care anything about the fracturing of that relationship. The court just cares about making a ruling but in the church we aren't just trying to determine who's in the wrong and who's in the right we are trying to bring brothers back together.

It's the same kind of situation even in the physical family those of us who are parents with young children and when they're in conflict which can often happen we're not just trying to figure out now which kid actually wronged the other kid we're certainly trying to come to figure out the truth but we're also helping them to be reconciled.

We're even coming alongside the sibling who actually was wronged and we're seeking to teach them as well how to forgive how to come towards their brother or sister who had wronged them.

[26 : 35] So it is in the family of God and the civil courts will never care about that. They will never care that the unity of the church is at stake.

So we're asking unbelievers to be the referee when they are adhering to completely different rules than we are. In fact they're playing a different game than we are.

It would be like asking referees to come and handle the umpiring duties of an MLB game. That doesn't make sense. Why are we having referees when we need umpires?

Why would we turn to the courts when the ultimate goal isn't even on their radar? So we should be thinking of the courts as a very foreign place.

A place that makes no sense for us to work out our differences as Christians. We shouldn't think of the courts as this natural place to go and do that.

[27 : 34] That's not for the courts. That's for the church. We are thinking in worldly ways just like the Corinthians if the courts seem like the appropriate place to hash out our disputes.

We do that with the help of brothers, not with lawyers and judges and juries. Too often, perhaps, in the Christian world, we think more highly of the courts than we should and we think too little of the church.

We forget a very basic truth. God has equipped us to work through our problems with the help of ordinary average Christians.

That is the norm that the Bible presents to us. We see it in Paul's question and he asks lots of rhetorical questions in this passage. We see it in verse five.

Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers? The obvious implied answer is well yes there is those wise enough.

[28 : 45] There are wise brothers who could help you. There are fellow Christians wise enough to assist. That's what Paul is saying. And he doesn't say it explicitly here but what has God given us?

Oh God has given us his word. God has given us his spirit. And I know that there are complexities to disputes but do we see what God says here? He says we have what we need to help each other work through disputes.

So we can't overlook this. The extraordinary means that God has given to ordinary Christians helping each other to be reconciled.

Helping each other towards the ultimate goal here in 1 Corinthians. 6. So the courts don't have that goal in mind because the goal is not just a verdict.

That is why Paul says in so many words be okay with getting defrauded. Be okay with suffering wrong because the goal isn't to get just the fair verdict it's to mend fractured relationships in the church.

[29 : 59] Two brothers have a grievance and we should be grieved by that and we should want to see those two brothers work through that grievance and come out on the other side embracing one another closer in love because they worked through that together and their relationship now stronger for it.

so do we see Paul's logic here if we have the right attitude towards our brother or towards our sister the court won't even be on our minds no one likes to be wronged but our priority shouldn't be vindication our priority should be reconciliation so we might be tempted towards bitterness or towards anger or hostility but God has absolutely called us to something higher to forgive as we've been forgiven to bear with one another what are we to do well love covers a multitude of sins so you see we've been talking a lot about going to court tonight maybe you're not considering going to court anytime soon maybe you're sitting here going okay good I don't have plans to go to court I'm glad for that but we don't need to find ourselves preparing for a court proceeding to apply this passage to our lives we may not find ourselves in court every day but in conflict well that happens a whole lot more often what's our response to being wronged by a brother or a sister

Jesus tells us to turn the other cheek to our enemies how much more should that be our posture towards brothers and sisters in the church so maybe you're not weighing whether you should take another Christian to court but in our hearts what kind of attitudes are bubbling up we are wronged all the time how are you responding how are you treating a brother or a sister who has wronged you so we've seen the problem stated we've seen the logic explained and now the reminder given the reminder given in verses 9 to 11 or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God do not be deceived neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who practice homosexuality nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor revilers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of

God and such were some of you 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 we see there in verse 9 Paul talks about the unrighteous we've seen that before already in our passage verse 1 Paul speaks of the unrighteous and he uses it to describe the unbelieving courts Christians bringing their disputes before the unrighteous so we get to verse 9 and it would seem what Paul is talking about those same people again don't bring your disputes before the unrighteous because don't you know the unrighteous won't inherit the kingdom of God so why are you bringing your cases before them I think Paul is making that point but I also think that Paul is hinting at something else he's also talking about those who profess to be

Christians but their actions say otherwise people in the Corinthian church whose actions may look like the world so how do we know that Paul is talking about them as well because back in verse 8 Paul says you yourselves wrong and defraud the verb that's translated there wrong is the same word found in verse 9 just now as an adjective translated unrighteous it could also be translated simply as wrong doer so Paul says in verse 8 you are wronging each other and in verse 9 wrong doers don't inherit the kingdom so this isn't just a call to stop bringing disputes before the unrighteous out there this is a call to look at ourselves and to make sure I am not the unrighteous there is this needed self examination we can't just treat each other like this and think everything is okay profess the name of

[35 : 01] Christ and yet sinfully drag a brother or sister into court Paul is saying those two things are incompatible so turn from your sin people who act like this they don't inherit the kingdom not because they get kicked out of the kingdom but because the fruit of their lives demonstrates they were never in the kingdom so Paul is saying flee from your sin and live in line with your confession of Christ wrongdoers don't inherit the kingdom and then Paul lists all these categories of sinful people he widens the scope of wrongdoers from just those who defraud which is very relevant to this passage and he lists many others that also won't inherit the kingdom the sexually immoral idolaters adulterers men who practice homosexuality thieves the greedy drunkards revilers and those who are swindlers none of these none of these will inherit the kingdom so there's this call here for self examination have we deceived ourselves into thinking any kind of sinful behavior might be acceptable or excusable

Paul is saying it's inexcusable and it is unwelcome in God's kingdom then we get to verse 11 this passage has predominantly been one of rebuke God's word has not pulled any punches with us we've been called to self examination we've been given this warning and now we're reminded of the glorious grace of God we come to verse 11 and such were some of you 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 there are so many places in God's word that give us this wonderful reminder here is who you once were but and often times it's but God it's implied here but you were washed you were sanctified you were justified who did those things

God but God God intervened but God was merciful to you but God was gracious to you but God sent his son to die on the cross for you a horrible death for horrible sinners such as us who were going our own way sworn enemies of him rebelling against him but God he saved us he washed us he cleansed us from our sins he sanctified us he set us apart for himself he justified us he declared us right with him and he did all of this through his son and his spirit salvation accomplished salvation applied so remember whose you are remember what he has done and live in obedience to him and what does it look like in this passage to live in obedience to him okay we don't take each other to court in some building with unbelievers but also we don't take each other to court in our hearts with our thoughts and with our attitudes we remember whose we are we remember how much we've been forgiven how patient

God has been with us how many complaints he could have against us yet how he has treated us mercifully instead and so then we treat each other just as we've been treated by God and that is a high calling we need God's help to do that and so now let's pray and ask for that help heavenly father you have been so merciful to us you have shown such grace to us we wronged you over and over and over again and yet you did not withdraw your mercy from us in fact you pursued us enemies that we were and you demonstrated your love for us and sending your son to die for us so father now as your beloved children as those who have been washed as those who have been sanctified and set apart as those who have been justified we pray now as new creatures that you would help us to live as new creatures that you would give us hearts that humbly love one another that are willing to be wronged because we love each other too much to go at each other we pray father that you would help us that we would walk humbly before you and that we would show each other such mercy as you have shown to us we pray that you would do that by your spirit working in us that grace we pray this in

Jesus name amen