

First Corinthians

VERSE-BY-VERSE



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In our last session we left off with Paul telling the Corinthians that they are not to judge those outside of the church—God will do that. We are however to make judgments of so-called believers who refuse to stop sinning. We are to separate ourselves from believers who refuse to live a life of sincerity and truth (1 Corinthians 5:8).

Chapter 6

Verse 1–

The apostle brings to light another apparent problem; they were taking each other to court, **go to law**. The context regards some who have a **matter against another**. Paul doesn't say what that matter is except a few verses later (vs. 7) he mentions that some were *defrauded* (hold something back).

The Church was not the Synagogue, but was probably modeled in some ways after the Jewish synagogue (In his letters Paul never uses the word synagogue):

- Synagogue worship meetings were on the Sabbath, and the second and fifth days of the week. In Corinth they probably met in homes. But, like the synagogue, the church was the center of their lives.
- Synagogue practiced judicial functions. They could decide legal matters. It would not have been foreign for a church made up of Jews to decide matters among themselves.
- The Synagogue is what gave character to the Jewish faith. It was a gathering place where important community affairs would be discussed.¹

Therefore, it would make sense that the Christians in Corinth would have brought many of these functions into the church. Again, they were capable of deciding legal matters among themselves and by themselves. As I mentioned in session 16 (see discussion on 1 Corinthians 5:7), this church in Corinth was made up primarily of Jewish believers, not Gentiles.

Notice Paul uses the phrase, **Before the saints**. When we read the word saints in the New Testament, we tend to think it means anyone in the body of Christ, i.e., all Christians. There is a case for us to consider that when the word **saints** is used in Paul's letters, he is referring to the first century believing Jews².

- The apostle Paul did not use the word "Saints."
- The New Testament word Paul uses is ἅγιος | *hagios*, which is most often translated "holy." In the Old Testament the term *holy ones* sometimes refers to angelic beings, but when it is translated *saints* it is always referring to a congregation or assembly associated with the nation of Israel and its coming Kingdom.
- The English word "saint" did not develop until the 1300's.
- Therefore, the word just means *holy ones* or *consecrated ones*.
- In 1st Corinthians 1:2 we saw that Paul addresses this letter to the *saints, with all that...* It appears he means two different groups of people. Could he mean Jews (saints) and Gentiles (with all that...)? Look also at the following verses, Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:2.

Does it matter? Yes. We need to know who we are in Christ. It matters how we interpret other places where the word *hagios* is used.

Jews would most likely never have taken a dispute before a Roman court of law. Gentiles would have done so without a second thought. This is why Paul is so stunned by their boldness, **Dare any of you** is literally *are you so bold* to go before the **unjust** when you should **go before the saints** and deal with the matter internally?

¹ Feinberg, C. L. "Synagogue." Ed. D. R. W. Wood et al. *New Bible dictionary* 1996 : n. pag. Print.

² Dr. Randy White. Who are the saints. <https://randywhiteministries.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/010618-Who-Are-the-Saints.pdf>

Verse 2–

In light of the previous passage, where the proposition was made that the Saints are redeemed Jews. If true, we come upon this statement which we may have misapplied. Many Christians have been taught that the *Church* will rule and reign with Christ. But is that teaching correct?

Do you not know, in other words, *you all know what I am about to tell you*. **That the saints shall judge the world?** If we interpret this as *all believers in Christ shall judge the world* (i.e., the Church), we might have a problem with other parts of the Bible. There are many Old Testament passages that specifically tell us who will judge.

Since the Church was a mystery in the Old Testament and was not revealed until the apostle Paul, the following passages must pertain to Israel, not the Church.

- **Daniel 7:18** | 18 But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.
- **Daniel 7:22** | 22 Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.
- **Psalms 149:5-9** | ⁵ Let the saints be joyful in glory: Let them sing aloud upon their beds. ⁶ Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, And a two-edged sword in their hand; ⁷ To execute vengeance upon the heathen, And punishments upon the people; ⁸ To bind their kings with chains, And their nobles with fetters of iron; ⁹ To execute upon them the judgment written: This honor have all his saints. Praise ye the Lord.
- **Zechariah 14:5** | 5 And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; For the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: Yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake In the days of Uzziah king of Judah: And the Lord my God shall come, And all the saints with thee.

Some churches equate the Church with Israel. They say all the promises for Israel (such as the ones above) now apply to the Church. This is called replacement theology and we should reject that. The Church is not Israel.

And if the world shall be judged by you. If it is not the Church who *rules and reigns* with Jesus Christ, then what will the Church be doing in eternity? The honest answer is, we don't know, except to say *we shall ever be with the Lord* (1 [Thessalonians 4:17](#)). Isn't that enough?

Are ye unworthy to judge in the smallest matters? Paul's point is, "Look, you are going to judge the world and you can't even decide the smallest legal matters among yourselves in the church?"

Verse 3–

Paul makes a second assumption (see vs. 2), **Do you not know that we shall judge angels?** If we go with the same proposition as in verses 1 and 2, that the saints means the redeemed Jews, then Paul is stating that the redeemed Jews will judge the world, and they will **judge angels**. But what does he mean? A couple of passages show us that angels will be judged:

- **Jude 6** ⁶ And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.
- **2 Peter 2:4** ⁴ For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.

These verses give us no indication that Jews will be doing the judging. Nonetheless, Paul says they will judge angels. His point I think is, "It's going to be a bigger deal to judge angels, why then can't you judge the **things that pertain to this life** among yourselves rather than going before a secular court?"

Verse 4–

Is Paul using hyperbole? Hyperbole is exaggerated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally. Paul does this a lot in his writings. Of course, we all do it from time to time. Hyperbole is part of normal conversation. Some people don't *get* hyperbole which causes them to take something as literal when it should be understood figuratively.

Paul says to **set them to judge who are the least esteemed** in the church. This seems like an odd thing to say. Remember the golden rule of interpretation?

WHEN THE PLAIN SENSE OF SCRIPTURE MAKES COMMON SENSE, SEEK NO OTHER SENSE.

In this case, the **least esteemed** may mean those who are utterly despised or those of no account. That does not make common sense; to set the most despised person in the church as a judge. A foolish person would not have any clue how to judge righteously. Therefore, he may be using a figure of speech and this is not likely a command for the church to follow in **judgments of things pertaining to this life**.

Why use this hyperbole? (Hyperbole = an exaggerated statement used to make a point).

Verse 5–

In verse 4 we understood Paul as using hyperbole when he said, *set a despised person over you as judge!* Why say that? He answers our question, **I speak to your shame...** He continues to develop the case for not going before the secular court of law to have their disputes in the church decided.

Is there not a wise man among you? No, not one? There must be at least one wise person in the church who can sit and **judge between his brethren**. Paul's point? Remember who you are! Are you telling me you can't find one wise person in the church? Look around you! Somebody can do it!

Verse 6–

It would have been difficult to be the pastor and to worship in the Corinth church. There was so much contention as **brother goes to law against brother**. We get the idea that it wasn't a few, but several in the church were taking each other to court **before unbelievers**. This new church was a poor example to the community, and it is doubtful anyone was being saved.

When we get caught up in the world, we have no time to share the good news. Who would listen to us anyway?

Contrast this church with the new believers in Thessalonica. They were "examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia [and they] sounded out the word of the Lord...in every place." (1 [Thessalonians 1:7,8](#)).

Verse 7–

Whether they win or lose their case, **there is utterly a fault among you**. They are already defeated. No one wins in the long run. Plus, this church has failed in other ways. In chapter five, they ignored the sin of fornication, and in fact, boasted, but now they are going to court on lesser charges.

Why do ye not rather take wrong? It is not that we should roll over and passively accept being wronged, but we do need to think it through. What will fighting back do to our testimony for Jesus Christ? **Why do you not rather suffer yourselves be defrauded?** He's probably writing rhetorically (to produce an effect). There is nothing wrong with trying to have a judgment go in your favor. He is not saying we should let people walk all over us. Even Paul appealed to Caesar ([Acts 25:11](#)).

Verse 8–

There is no softer way to put it, **you yourselves do wrong and defraud** (cheat). The word **wrong** is to *act unjustly or wickedly*. Paul uses the same word **defraud**, ἀποστερέω, *apostereo* in [1st Timothy 6:5](#) to refer to one who does not teach the sound doctrine, but rather has a mind **destitute** (*apostereo*) of truth.

Both of **these things** are being done in the church **to your brethren!**

Remember, Paul is writing this to Christians!

"I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for you were not able to bear it, neither yet now are you able. For you are carnal...and walk as men." (1 [Corinthians 3: 2-3](#))