

Living Like a Christian

(1 Corinthians 6:1-11)

There were many problems in the church at Corinth. We have looked at two of them: disunity and a man having sex with his father's wife (probably his step-mother). Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul next addresses lawsuits and unrighteousness. This section gives us **three** essential principles for **living like a Christian**.

Avoid litigation (6:1, 6-8)

The believers at Corinth were taking each other into pagan courts to settle their personal disputes. This is the polar opposite of what Christian behavior is supposed to be like. **Living like a Christian** requires *forbearing one another*, which means making allowances for each other's faults (Col. 3:13a). What does the rest of that verse (Col. 3:13b) command?

Paul begins this chapter, *Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? (6:1)*. The word *matter* refers to a legal dispute. It is obvious Paul is not referring to criminal matters, such as theft, embezzlement, assault, etc. Criminal matters belong in courts of law. That's one reason God established civil government. How does 1 Peter 2:14b describe God's purpose for governmental authority?

Whatever the dispute was, Paul writes, *But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. ⁷Now therefore there is utterly a fault [failure] among you, because ye go to law one with another (6:6-7a)*. Unbelievers were having a "field day" of entertainment, watching Christians "slug it out" in pagan courts. That's why Paul writes it *is utterly* a failure for them.

After watching the spectacle of Corinthian believers in civil court, who would believe the Christian faith is the answer to life's problems and a place where people forgive and love one another? Therefore, Paul asks, *Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? (6:7b-c)*. Wouldn't it be better to be wronged or cheated than to tarnish the Lord's name or His church?

Paul continues, *Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren (6:8)*. To make matters worse, the Christians in Corinth were not just victims. They were also cheating and doing wrong to fellow believers. It could have been retaliation of some kind. The point is, if a fellow Christian wrongs us, why not forgive the wrong, rather than hurt the witness of Christ and His church by suing one another in court? This is obeying what command in 1 Thessalonians 5:15?

To live like a Christian, **avoid litigation** and ...

Seek godly mediation (6:2-5)

Paul also asks a series of questions based on what he has previously taught believers in Corinth. He begins, *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? (6:2)*. What does Jesus declare in John 5:22?

Apparently, the Lord Jesus will delegate some of His authority to believers. Who will we *judge*? Paul explains: *Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? (6:3)*. Paul doesn't specify which *angels*, but it will probably be fallen *angels*. Where is God presently keeping these fallen *angels*, according to 2 Peter 2:4?

The word translated *hell* (TARTARUS, tar-tar'-us) refers to the deepest abyss of Hades. Since believers are going to *judge* fallen *angels*, surely they should be able to handle disputes among believers.

Paul is shocked that believers he personally taught are taking their disputes to unbelieving judges *who are least esteemed in the church (6:4)*. Paul knows a mature, respected believer, who knows God's Word, is better than any pagan judge. Therefore, if you have a dispute with a fellow believer, seek a godly person to help settle the matter and be willing to abide by that decision.

Paul continues, *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? (6:5)*. What they are doing is a *shame* because it is harmful to the Gospel and the church in Corinth.

To live like a Christian, **avoid litigation, seek godly mediation**, and ...

Remember your regeneration (6:9-11)

To reinforce what he has just written, Paul reminds the Corinthians that Christians are called to live a different kind of life. Therefore, what does Paul write in 6:9a?

Who are *the unrighteous*? God doesn't want us to be *deceived*, so to leave no doubt, He inspires Paul to catalog what is *unrighteous*. Paul begins with the *fornicators* (PORNOS, por' nos), which refers to sex outside the marriage of a man and a woman. *Idolaters* refers to worshippers of any god except Jehovah God (6:9a-d). A false god can be sex, money, success, or anything that one worships.

Adulterers refers to married persons having sex with someone other than his or her marriage partner. *Effeminate* and *abusers of themselves with mankind* refer to practicing homosexuals and sodomy (6:9e-g). Homosexuality, male prostitution, and pederasty (ped-uh-ras'-tee, sex between men and boys) were common in the Greek culture and the Roman Empire of Paul's time. It has been estimated that fourteen of the last fifteen Roman emperors were either bisexual or homosexual. That's why God, through Paul, warns us: *Be not deceived*.

Some believe homosexuality is a genetic trait, like being born with blue eyes or blonde hair. Some believe it is an alternate lifestyle that should be accepted as normal. However, the Bible is clear. It is a sin. Because of present-day culture, we need to heed what warning God gives through Isaiah (Isaiah 5:20a)?

The word *woe* is an exclamation of reproach, denoting displeasure and coming judgment (Rev. 9:12, 11:14).

Next in the list are *thieves* (6:10). There are many ways to steal—not putting in a day's work for a day's pay, coming in habitually late for work or leaving early, embezzlement, cheating on taxes, etc. Next, Paul lists *covetous*, which refers to an unquenchable desire for possessions or success. *Drunkards* is self-explanatory. *Revilers* are verbally abusive people who wound with words. *Extortioners* are people who deceitfully sell defective merchandise or take advantage of people in any way for financial gain. None in this list, who practice such things, will *inherit the kingdom of God* (6:10).

Now, Paul shares some wonderful news: *And such were some of you* (6:11a). The church at Corinth, like every Bible-believing and teaching church, is full of people who, before coming to Christ, practiced not only the sins Paul lists, but many others as well. Therefore, Paul writes, *but ye are washed* (6:11b). This refers to regeneration, or salvation, which is *not by works of righteousness which we have done* (Titus 3:5a). What does the rest of that verse declare?

In Christ, we are also *sanctified* (6:11c), which means set apart to live for God. Sanctification is a lifelong process of becoming more and more like Jesus Christ. Plus, we are *justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God* (6:11d). The word *justified* means declared righteous before God, or saved. All true believers have been *sanctified* and *justified* because we have been spiritually *washed* by the blood of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. How does Paul sum up the result of being *washed, sanctified, and justified* in 2 Corinthians 5:17?

To live like a Christian, **avoid litigation, seek godly mediation, and remember your regeneration.**