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Failure to Resolve Personal Disputes

6: 1-11

Failure to resolve personal disputes DIG: Why did Paul object to the Corinthian believers taking each other to court? What was wrong with their attitude? Why do lawsuits cast a shadow over the church? How do you think verse 11 fits in with the rest of the passage?

REFLECT: What attitudes underlying this situation do you see in yourself: An insistence on “my rights?” A desire for revenge? A desire to make things right? A willingness to “bend the rules?” Preferring my old way of life rather than following what the Bible says?

Disputes among believers should be settled by believers.



One of the major problems in **the church** at **Corinth** was that the baby believers were dragging their worldly behaviors into **the church**. They were so taken with human philosophy, and so intent of believing and doing what they wanted that they were divided, bickering and exceptionally immoral. In fact, it would have been difficult to distinguish them from their pagan neighbors. As has been said many times, the problem was not that **the church** was **Corinth**, the problem was that **Corinth** was in **the church**! **Lawsuits** were merely one of several examples.

For centuries Jews had settled all their disputes either privately or in a synagogue court.

They refused to take their problems before a pagan court, believing that to do so would imply that **God**, through **His** own people using **His** own scriptural principles, was not competent to solve every problem. In fact, it was considered a form of blasphemy to go to court before Gentiles. Both Greek and Roman rulers had allowed the Jews to continue that practice, even outside of the Land. Under Roman law Jews could try virtually every offense and give almost any sentence, except that of death.

In confronting the evil in the **Corinthian** church, **Paul** mentions **three areas of misunderstanding** that those believers had. They misunderstood **the true rank** they had in relation to the world, **the true attitude** they should have in relation to one another, and **the true character** they should have in relation to **God's** standards of righteousness.¹⁵⁴ The whole scene fills **Paul** with indignation, so much so that there is scarcely any argument at all. Indeed, the whole passage is punctuated by a series of "**Don't you know?**" questions that indicate **his** high level of frustration with them that **he** was experiencing over this matter.¹⁵⁵

The true rank of believers (6:1-6): How dare one of you with a complaint against another go to court before pagan judges and not before God's people (6:1)? Because he already knew the answer, his question was rhetorical. He was saying, "How can this be? Is it really true that some of you are actually suing each other, and that you are even doing it in public, pagan courts? How can you think of taking your problems outside the family of believers to be settled?" All the resources of truth, wisdom, equity, justice, love, kindness, generosity, and understanding reside with **God's people**.

Believers are not to take other believers to worldly courts. When we put ourselves under the authority of the world in this way, we confess that we do not have right actions and right attitudes. Believers who go to court with believers are more concerned with revenge or gain than with the unity of the Body and the glory of **Yeshua**. Disputes among believers should be settled by believers. If we, as believers, with our wonderful gifts and resources in Messiah, cannot settle a dispute, how can we expect unbelievers to do it?

Don't you know that God's people are going to judge the universe? If you are going to judge the universe, are you incompetent to judge these minor, every day matters that come up among you now (6:2)? When **Yeshua Messiah** returns to set up **His** Messianic Kingdom (see the commentary on **Isaiah**, to see link click **Kg - The Return of Jesus Christ to Bozrah**), believers from throughout all of history will reign, sitting with **Him on His throne (Dani'el 7:22 and Revelation 3:21)**. Part of our responsibility as **rulers with Messiah** will be to **judge the world**. The apostles will have special authority, ruling from **twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Isra'el (Matthew 19:28)**. But

every believer will participate in some way. **He who wins the victory and does what I want until the goal is reached, I will give him authority over the nations; he will rule them with a staff of iron and dash them to pieces like pottery (Revelation 2:26-27).**

Believers will also **judge the angels. Don't you know that we will judge angels, not to mention affairs of everyday life (6:3)?** Holy angels have no **sin** for which to be condemned. Therefore, we conclude that believers will help judge the fallen angels and exercise some rule over the holy angels. Since **Messiah** is exalted above all **the angles (Ephesians 1:20-23)**, since we are **in Him** and like **Him** apart from **His** deity, we will somehow share in **His** authority. Whatever the sphere and extent of that heavenly judgment or ruling, **Paul's** point here is the same: If we are to judge and rule over the world and over the angels in the Messianic Kingdom, then we are surely able, under the guidance of Scripture and **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**, to settle any matters of disagreement among ourselves today.

So, if you require judgments about matters of everyday life, why do you put them in front of men who have no standing in the Messianic Community (6:4)? If two believers cannot agree between themselves, they should ask fellow believers to settle the matter for them, and be willing to abide by that decision. The poorest equipped believer, who seeks the counsel of **God's Word** and **Spirit**, is much more competent to settle disagreements between fellow believers than is the most highly trained unbelieving judge who is devoid of divine truth.

Paul was ashamed of the behavior of **those** whom **he** had taught and among **those** he had ministered. **They** knew better. **I say, shame on you! He** continues with a note of sarcasm: **Can it be that there isn't one person among you wise enough to be able to settle a dispute between brothers (see Cq - The Distinguishing of Spirits)? Instead, a brother brings a lawsuit against another brother, and that before unbelievers (6:5-6)!** The mark that should most characterize believers is love. **John** makes it absolutely clear: **Here is how one can distinguish clearly between God's children and those of the Adversary: everyone who does not continue doing what is right is not from God. Likewise, anyone who fails to keep loving his brother is not from God. For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning: that we should love each other (First John 3:10-11). Love,** however, did not characterize the **Corinthian** believers. **They** acted like pagans, and, as **Paul** would remind them a few chapters later, a believer without **love** is **merely a blaring brass or a cymbal clanging, in fact . . . nothing (13:1-2).**¹⁵⁶

The true attitude of believers (6:7-8): Actually, if you are bringing lawsuits against each other, it is already a defeat for you. Believers who take fellow believers to court lose spiritually before the case is heard. The case is lost in **God's** sight, already suffering a spiritual defeat. **The accuser** is selfish, and **he** discredits the power, wisdom, and work of **ADONAI**, when **he** tries to get what **he** wants through the judgment of unbelievers.

Paul asks sharply: Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? Instead, you yourselves wrong and cheat; and you do it to your own brothers (6:8)! It is far better to lose financially than to lose spiritually. Even when we are clearly in the legal right, we do not have the moral and spiritual right to insist on our legal right in public court. If the brother has wronged us in any way, our response should be to forgive him and to leave the outcome of the matter in **God's** hands. **The Lord** may give or take away. **He** is sovereign and has **His** will and purpose both in what we gain and in what we lose. We should gracefully accept that. When you take a **brother** to court, nobody really wins . . . except the devil.

If we are **wronged** or **cheated** we should be forgiving, not bitter. If we cannot convince the brother to make things right, and if he will not listen to fellow believers, we are better off to suffer the loss of injustice than to bring a lawsuit against him. **Do not resist him who is evil, Yeshua commanded, but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also (Matthew 5:39-40).** Contrary to the world's standard, it is better to be sued and lose than to sue and win. In fact, spiritually, it is impossible for a believer to sue and win. When we are **cheated wrongfully**, we are to cast ourselves on the care of **the Lord**, who is able to work that for our good and **His** glory.¹⁵⁷

The true character of believers (6:9-11): Don't you know that unrighteous people will have no share in the Kingdom of God? Don't deceive yourselves - people who engage in sex before marriage, who worship idols, who engage in sex after marriage with someone other than their spouse, who are effeminate (Greek: *malakoi*, meaning *soft to the touch*) or engage in homosexuality (Greek: *arsenokoitai*, meaning *men who lie with a male*, using the language as **Leviticus 18:22** and **20:13**), who steal, who are greedy, who get drunk, who assail people with contemptuous language, who rob - none of them will share in the Kingdom of God (6:9-10). Paul's purpose here is not to give a laundry list of **sins** that will indicate one has lost his salvation. There are no such **sins**. Since we can do no work to gain our salvation, we can do no work to lose our salvation. The only unforgivable **sin** is the rejection of **the Ruach (Matthew 12:31)**. Rather, **he** is giving a list of unbelievers who are typical of the unsaved, unrighteous,

unjustified. If **they** had not accepted **Messiah** as **their Lord** and **Savior**, **none of them will share in the Kingdom of God.**

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** that **You** are perfectly **Holy**! In **Isaiah's** vision of the heavenly Temple, **he** saw Seraphim calling out: **Holy, holy, holy, is Adonai-Tzva'ot (Isaiah 6:3)**! I bow in humble worship of **You** for **Yeshua's** great mercy and love to take our punishment of death and then to give us **His** righteousness. **He made the One who knew no sin to become a sin offering on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (Second Corinthians 5:21).***

*Let us never take **sin** lightly, for it cost great pain, sorrow and suffering for **Your** only **Son**, **Yeshua**. May we live with a righteous determination to serve **You** with all our heart and mind and body in every situation. May we see all **sin** as ugly and awful and may we keep **Yeshua's** example before us as we **run the race** of this life so we may finish strong. **Let us run with endurance the race set before us, focusing on Yeshua, the initiator and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, disregarding its shame; and He has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary in your souls and lose heart (Hebrews 12:1c-3).** We love **You** and long to be with **You**, but until that time comes, we will press on with joy in our hearts - knowing that **Your Kingdom** will last forever! In **Yeshua's** **holy** name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

Effeminate or engage in homosexuality, both refer to those who exchange and corrupt the normal male-female sexual roles and relations. **Homosexuality** is condemned throughout Scripture. It was so characteristic of Sodom that the word sodomy is a synonym for that **sin** (see the commentary on **Genesis Ey - Two Angels Arrived at Sodom in the Evening**). Transvestism, sex change, **homosexuality**, and other gender perversions are included. **God's** unique **creation**, those created in **His** image, were **created male and female (Genesis 1:27)**, and **the Lord** strictly forbids the two roles to be blurred, much less changed. The Bible is very clear on this: **You are not to go to bed with a man as with a woman (Leviticus 18:22). If a man goes to bed with a man as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they must be put to death; their blood is on them (Leviticus 20:13). A woman is not to put on men's clothing, and a man is not to put on women's clothing for whoever does these things is detestable to ADONAI your God (Deuteronomy 22:5).**

God has given them up to degrading passions; so that their women exchange

natural sexual relations for unnatural; and likewise the men, giving up natural shameful acts with other men and receiving in their own persons the penalty appropriate to their perversion (Romans 1:26-27).

The Torah is for those who are heedless of it and rebellious, ungodly and sinful, wicked and worldly, for people who kill their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexual immoral (Greek: *pornos* , from where we get *pornography*) - both heterosexual and homosexual (First Timothy 1:9b-10a).

And Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities followed a pattern like theirs, committing sexual sins and perversions (Greek: *ekporneuo* , meaning *indulged in gross immorality*), lie exposed as a warning of the everlasting fire awaiting those who must undergo punishment (Jude 7).

These scriptures from both the TaNaKh and B'rit Chadashah are quite sobering. There are no examples in Scripture of **homosexual** relationships being commended.

Finally, on this issue, it is important to understand that **homosexuality** is not the unforgivable **sin** (see the commentary on [The Life of Christ Em - Whoever Blasphemes Against the Holy Spirit Will Never Be Forgiven](#)). Escaping that lifestyle is very, very difficult. For many, it is a lifelong struggle. A person can be saved and still struggle with **homosexuality**. Therefore, whatever one thinks about the immorality of **homosexual** behavior, or about the abhorrent of elements within the **homosexual** lobby, **homosexual** impulses are just like all other **sinful** impulses of **the flesh (Romans 7:14-25)**. A **homosexual** impulse cannot **give birth to sin** unless one gives in to it (**James 1:13-15**). The person with **homosexual** temptation, or practice, should evoke our concern, sympathy, help, and understanding, not our scorn or hatred. We should love the **sinner**, but hate the **sin** because the church should be a hospital for hurting people. For more extensive reading on this subject, see my commentary on [Leviticus Ae - The Bible and Homosexual Practice](#).

We must remember that **homosexuality** in the Bible is always used as a verb and not a noun. Because of our fallen nature, we all have thoughts in our minds that we shouldn't have, be it money, sex, or power. Therefore, someone who has **homosexual thoughts**, but does not act on them, is not a **homosexual**. Hopefully, as we are conformed into the **likeness of Messiah (Romans 8:29)**, the lifelong process of sanctification will aid us in **taking every thought captive** (see the commentary on [Second Corinthians Bt - Winning the Spiritual War](#)).

Paul can hardly bring **himself** to conclude on the preceding note of warning, especially since it might leave the impression that **the Corinthians** were actually among the wicked. **He** brings the whole matter to a close by reaffirming:¹⁵⁸ **Some of you used to do these things. But** (Greek: *alla*) **you have cleansed yourselves, but** (*alla*) **you have been set apart for God, but** (*alla*) **you have come to be counted righteous through the power of the Lord Yeshua the Messiah and the Spirit of our God (6:11).** This does not mean that people do not continue to struggle with their sin issues once they are saved. Yes, some people who are saved immediately stop drinking, adultery, stealing or **homosexuality** activity. But most people continue their process of sanctification throughout their lifetime.¹⁵⁹

Now, because of all that **God** had done for **them** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Bw - What God Does for us at the Moment of Faith**), **they** had an obligation to **God** to use **their** bodies for **His** service and **His** glory. The **Corinthian** church, as churches today, had **ex-fornicators, ex-adulterers, ex-homosexuals, ex-thieves, ex-alcoholics**, and so on. Though many believers have never been guilty of these specific **sins**, every believer was **sinful** before he or she was saved. Every believer is an **ex-sinner**, so to speak. And **Messiah** came for the purpose of saving **sinners (Matthew 9:13)**. The great strength of the gospel is that no person has **sinned** too deeply or too long to be saved.¹⁶⁰