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# **1 Corinthians (2013) - Lesson 6A**

## **Chapter 6:1-7**

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- Onward we go in the list of concerns Paul is addressing in Corinth
  - Last week, Paul demanded the church cease in judging unbelievers
    - Stop isolating themselves from the very people they were supposed to win over for Christ
    - Be in the world so they can represent Christ
  - But at the same time, they should be of the world
    - The church must judge itself and hold itself accountable so we won't share in the sin of the world
    - Tolerating sin is self-destructive to the body of Christ
    - So while we can't judge others, we must acknowledge and respond to unrepentant sin in the body of Christ
- The discussion of judging within the church leads Paul into the third major issue in the church

**1Cor. 6:1 Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous and not before the saints?**

- Chloe reported to Paul that men within the church were settling personal disputes by taking one another to Greek courts
  - Essentially, one man would sue another over some concern
    - The word translated law is *krino*, in the middle voice in Greek
    - *Krino* is judge in Greek, and the middle voice would be translated “going before judgment”
    - So the Corinthian Christians were turning to Greek courts and Greek judges seeking relief
  - Paul opens this section with a series of rhetorical questions to get the church's attention to the seriousness of this matter
    - In fact, Paul is going to use this technique throughout this chapter, often beginning his questions with the phrase “do you not know”
    - Here again, Paul's style reveals his personal frustration at their immature behavior
    - By asking questions in this way, Paul is scolding them even as he teaches, which is admonishment
    - He had taught these things in one form or another, but apparently they went in one ear and out the other in this church
- Clearly Paul is not happy that this church is seeking judgment from the pagan, unbelieving world in Corinth, but we need to read further to understand why this bothers Paul

**1Cor. 6:2 Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts?**

**1Cor. 6:3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters**

## of this life?

- Paul's first "do you not know" question raises the topic of the next age
  - Paul says in a time to come, the Lord will allow the saints to judge the world
    - What time is Paul describing?
    - He's referring to the coming Messianic or Millennial Kingdom, which will last for 1,000 years following Jesus' Second Coming
  - That Kingdom will exist on the Earth as a very real, very complex world like the one we have today
    - Believers in Jesus Christ will join Christ in that world in resurrected, sinless, eternal bodies
    - We will live with Christ, Who will reign over this earthly world
    - And scripture says we will share in His reign, judging the world in which we live

**Rev. 20:4** Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

- We see this truth reflected in numerous other places in the New Testament
  - Jesus says in the seven letters to the church that the family of believers are designated by our faith as a kingdom of priests and rulers over the Kingdom to come

**Rev. 5:9** And they sang a new song, saying,

**“Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.**

**Rev. 5:10** “You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.”

- Jesus will grant us authority to rule even as the Father has granted Him all authority over the Earth

**Rev. 2:26** ‘He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS;

**Rev. 2:27** AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF

## **THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received authority from My Father;**

- Notice Jesus says our authority doesn't arrive until He has assumed His role as ruler over the nations
- This moment arrives at His Second Coming when the Kingdom on earth is established, as Daniel teaches

**Dan. 7:26 'But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever.**

**Dan. 7:27 'Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.'**

- Finally, Jesus says our authority in that Kingdom will be determined by our faithfulness in this time we serve Him
  - Our life on earth now is a "try-out" to demonstrate to Jesus that we are worthy of greater opportunity to serve Him in the Kingdom
  - Jesus taught this truth in a well-known parable

**Luke 19:15 "When he returned, after receiving the kingdom, he ordered that these slaves, to whom he had given the money, be called to him so that he might know what business they had done.**

**Luke 19:16 "The first appeared, saying, 'Master, your mina has made ten minas more.'**

**Luke 19:17 "And he said to him, 'Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you are to be in authority over ten cities.'**

**Luke 19:18 "The second came, saying, 'Your mina, master, has made five minas.'**

**Luke 19:19 "And he said to him also, 'And you are to be over five cities.'**

- Furthermore, in v.3 Paul says we will one day judge even the fallen angels
  - Jude tells us that the angels (i.e., demons) who sinned in the days of Noah are held in chains until the day of judgment

**Jude 6 And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day,**

- Now we learn from Paul that the saints who have returned to earth with Jesus on that day will participate in that judgment of the world, including of angels
- We don't know much more about that moment, and I wonder why we would have

anything to say in the judgment of demons

- Perhaps we are made aware of the ways in which these demons conspired against us in our days on earth
- If so, then perhaps we are given opportunity to pronounce judgment against those demons that brought harm to us
- If my speculation is correct, then it would mean that though the Lord allows demons to impact our lives today, He is also planning for our opportunity to obtain justice in the future
- Then in the second half of vs.2 & 3, Paul makes his application with two more rhetorical questions
  - In v2. he asks, if the Lord considers us capable of reigning over the world with Him then certainly we should be able to judge trifling matters among ourselves
    - Paul doesn't mean that our concerns today aren't serious or complicated at times
    - But by comparison, the kind of judgments we make today are insignificant compared to the level of authority and judgment we will possess in the Kingdom
  - And in the second half of v.3, Paul repeats the conclusion
    - If we are deemed by the Lord to be worthy of judging angelic beings, can't we handle human matters?
    - Would an accomplished surgeon seek medical advice from a first-year medical student?
    - Would a professional basketball athlete get tips from high school players?
  - Now Paul is not suggesting that Christians are automatically more wise in legal matters than unbelievers, for we know there are unbelievers with much greater legal expertise
    - Paul is speaking about outcomes, not expertise
    - The body of Christ possesses God's wisdom and has the benefit of the Spirit's guidance
    - These qualities are superior to the world's wisdom for the purpose of arriving at just and righteous outcomes
  - Christians may – and often will – judge matters very differently than the unbelieving world would
    - Not because we have greater legal expertise than they
    - But because we have different values and see matters with an eternal outlook
- So these opening questions beg a central question: why would Christians hand over judgment of their disputes to people who do not share our values or outlook?
  - That's the question Paul raises in the next set of verses

**1Cor. 6:4 So if you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church?**

**1Cor. 6:5 I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not among you one wise**

**man who will be able to decide between his brethren,  
1Cor. 6:6 but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers?**

- Paul's question in v.4 is a little difficult to follow in our English translation
  - A better translation would be "Then when you have need for judgment in matters of this life, you select judges who have no standing in the church."
    - Though the church will one day judge all matters of the eternal kingdom, for now it has reversed roles with the unbelieving world
    - The church selected Greek courts to be their judges, men who have no knowledge of, or relationship to, the church and to Christ
  - Under what circumstances would the church expect an unbeliever's point of view to be preferable to the judgment of fellow believers?
    - The obvious answer is that the church body didn't see anyone in the church who could exercise judgment with wisdom and fairness
    - Self-evidently, if the church was willing to seek outside judgment from men who didn't know the Lord, didn't know His word and didn't have His Spirit, then they must have had a pretty low opinion of leaders and judges within the body
  - That's the conclusion Paul comes to in v.5
    - He says he points out that this situation is to the shame of the church
    - Specifically, it's shameful that there is not one among the church wise enough to handle these matters
    - The collective immaturity of this church was evidenced, once again, by their choices and actions
    - In this case, it was evidenced by brother willing to take brother before an unbeliever to settle a matter
- So how far do we take Paul's teaching? What obligations does the church have today when it comes to settling disputes?
  - Well, let's be careful to separate the biblical principle Paul is teaching from the specific application he makes for Corinth
    - I see at least two principles at the center of Paul's teaching
    - First, the church must seek to settle disputes within the family of God
      - We should not air our dirty laundry in front of the unbelieving world
  - Paul's concern is not strictly one of maintaining an image, though our witness could be at risk
    - The real concern is whether the church is settling disputes according to the right standards
      - Our standards will be different than the unbelieving world
      - Therefore, our judgments must look different
    - If we seek counsel from unbelievers, we're likely to be pulled farther from the Lord and His word by that counsel

- The second principle is one of preparing for the kingdom responsibilities we will bear
  - Paul says it is to the shame of the church that they found no one in their ranks capable of exercising judgment over small matters
  - The church must take seriously our responsibility to make the most of the “minas” the Lord has assigned to us
    - So that in the judgment day we will be counted worthy of “ten cities” as Jesus assigns awards
- These principle doesn't automatically preclude using law courts when absolutely necessary
  - For example, if our dispute lies with an unbeliever, then clearly we must use regular law courts to settle the matter
    - We cannot expect an unbeliever to subject himself to the judgment of church leaders
  - And unfortunately there may also be times when we use a law court to settle disputes with a brother or sister
    - Probably the most common example would be a Christian couple going through a legal divorce
    - Ignoring the fact that divorce is wrong by itself, to conduct the divorce before an unbelieving judge adds sin on top of sin
  - Remember, Paul says when we take a believer to court rather than settling the matter in the church, such a situation is to our shame
    - We may win our case in court
    - But we may also be risking something far greater in the loss of heavenly reward because we took this course of action
  - It would be better to lose the earthly dispute to preserve our heavenly reward
  - Which is what Paul concludes

**1Cor. 6:7** **Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?**

- For these Corinthians, Paul says it was “already” a defeat to go to the unbelieving court
  - The word in Greek for defeat is *hettema*, which literally means loss
    - I think that is the better translation in this situation
    - Paul is saying you have already lost something when you take a believer into the world's courtroom
  - That's the difference between living with a worldly perspective and an eternal perspective
    - As Christians, we are told to consider the eternal implications for every decision we make

- As we conduct ourselves in this age, think about the next
      - As we live with our wife or husband
      - As we raise our kids
      - As we spend our money, as we schedule our time
      - How are these decisions impacting the glory of the Lord, and therefore our judgment and inheritance?
  - When we make a decision to take a brother or sister to an unbelieving judge, we have made a decision with eternal implications
    - Paul says even if we win that case in the courtroom, there will be loss
    - Perhaps the dispute is over money, property, custody, or some other right we feel we are owed
    - Regardless of what we win for ourselves in this life, how will it compare to the eternal reward that could have been ours?
    - It's hard to believe that whatever we could obtain in a human court would be worth the loss of what Jesus might award us
- That's why Paul says in v.7, why would we rather be wronged or defrauded?
  - If your brother or sister is determined to act sinfully against you, why would you fight them and join in that sin?
    - When Jesus was struck, he didn't fight back
    - He was being wronged, but Jesus withheld His right to defend Himself because under the circumstances it would have resulted in the loss of His reward
    - The Father had commanded Him to submit to that abuse for the good of all creation
    - So Jesus preserved His eternal reward
    - Isaiah prophetically described Jesus' situation

**Is. 53:7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted,  
Yet He did not open His mouth;  
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,  
And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,  
So He did not open His mouth.**

**Is. 53:8 By oppression and judgment He was taken away;  
And as for His generation, who considered  
That He was cut off out of the land of the living  
For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?**

**Is. 53:9 His grave was assigned with wicked men,  
Yet He was with a rich man in His death,  
Because He had done no violence,  
Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.**

**Is. 53:10 But the LORD was pleased  
To crush Him, putting Him to grief;**



**If He would render Himself as a guilt offering,  
He will see His offspring,  
He will prolong His days,  
And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.**

**Is. 53:11** As a result of the anguish of His soul,

**He will see it and be satisfied;  
By His knowledge the Righteous One,  
My Servant, will justify the many,  
As He will bear their iniquities.**

**Is. 53:12** Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great,

**And He will divide the booty with the strong;  
Because He poured out Himself to death,  
And was numbered with the transgressors;  
Yet He Himself bore the sin of many,  
And interceded for the transgressors.**

- Is it too great a thing for Jesus to ask us to follow in His footsteps, to forgo some earthly gains if means pleasing the Father?
  - We're conditioned by the unbelieving world to think we have a "right" to justice and to recompense, even with our brothers and sisters
  - We let our earthly needs and our pride and ego get in the way of godliness and charity and forgiveness and grace
  - According to scripture it's better to lose your court case, even it means suffering financial loss, than that we would lose the Lord's approval
- So let's summarize the practical implications of Paul's teaching
  - First, the church should be the place we bring our disputes between believers
    - We live according to the decisions of the elders or other church leaders we entrust with these situations
    - Those decisions should be made with the wisdom of scripture and the guidance of the Holy Spirit
    - And we ought to abide by them
  - Secondly, if we find ourselves in a dispute with a believer who will not submit to the church, then we should prayerfully consider how to proceed
    - If we are taken to court by that believer, we have a choice to make
    - Do we believe participating in the proceedings comes at the risk of sinning according to Paul's teaching here?
      - Sometimes, our participation is unavoidable, if we are subpoenaed to testify
      - In such cases, the decision has been taken out of our hands, and according to Romans 13 we must comply with the law
  - But so far as it depends upon us, we are to be at peace with all men
    - And according to Paul's teaching in this chapter, we ought to refuse to defend our own interests in front of unbelievers

- Let the believer acting against us take from us and live without
- Your Father in Heaven will see your obedience and will reward you in the day
- Like the Father did for His Son, Who bore far greater abuse on your behalf
- You've heard me say at times in the past that we must live with eyes for eternity
  - Here's an excellent example of what I mean by that phrase
    - Making everyday choices and decisions conscience of how our decisions impact our eternal future
    - Living aware of these relationships, aware of the Lord's expectations, aware of our coming judgment
    - Placing higher value on the future we cannot see than on the present we do
      - Knowing that this world is passing away
      - And the Kingdom is right around the corner