

**Text: 1 Cor 5.1-13**

As we move through Corinthians, we will keep our place by developing the broad outline we started with.

**I. Introduction (1.1-9)****II. Conditions reported to Paul (1.10-6.20)**

## A. Divisions in the church (1.10-4.21)

1 Cor 1.11 For I have been **informed** concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's *people*, that there are quarrels among you.

The divisions reflected a worldly approach by the Corinthians, treating their leading teachers as competing philosophers, not recognizing they were their servants to lead them to Christ.

## B. Lack of discipline in the church (5.1-6.20)

1 Cor 5.1 ¶ It is actually **reported** that there is immorality among you...

## 1. The report of immorality in the church

**Today:** Other reported offenses, 1 Corinthians 6

On “reported offenses:”

1. Clearly, the content of chs. 1-5 are matters reported to Paul by others (see 1Co 1.11, 5.1)
2. The next clear break comes in 7.1: “Now concerning the things about which you wrote”
3. We **assume** that 1 Cor 6 continues dealing with “reported offenses” “the only way he could have known about the lawsuits among believers in Corinth is by someone’s having informed him.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Verlyn D. Verbrugge, “1 Corinthians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Romans-Galatians*, ed. Tremper Longman and David E. Garland, Revised Edition, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2006), 305.

## The matter of lawsuits among Christians (1 Cor 6.1-11)

Background:

“Like modern North American society, Roman society was extremely litigious. Cases began to be heard at dawn and sometimes could be argued as late as sunset. Judges were always chosen from among the well-to-do, and most legal disputes revolved around money.”<sup>2</sup>

Compare 5.12-13: these verses provide a transition to this section.

Some commentaries assume that this section arises out of one specific case. The text doesn't seem to assume this, but rather point to a general practice.

The section contains mostly very pointed questions from Paul to the Corinthians.

1. What is Paul's attitude towards lawsuits between Christians? (1)  
**extremely antagonistic**
2. What eschatological (end-times) truths affect this question in vv. 2-3?
  - a. (2) **saints will judge the world**
  - b. (3) **saints will judge angels**
3. What do these truths suggest about Christians and settling disputes among them?  
**basic competence for judging worldly matters**
4. Verse 4 challenges our understanding. There are four ways conservative commentators take the verse. Here are samples for our discussion:

<sup>KJV</sup> 1Co 6:4 If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.

**Imperative – this is what you should do**

<sup>NAU</sup> 1Co 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? **Questioning – is this the way you would do it?**

<sup>2</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 1Co 6.1.

NIRV 1Co 6:4 So if you want to press charges in matters like that, appoint as judges members of the church who aren't very important! **Ironical – this isn't really what you would do but said this way for effect.**

ESV 1Co 6:4 So if you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church? **Questioning why they would put their cases before unbelievers who don't share Christian values.**

5. What was shameful about their conduct? (5-6)
  - a. (5) **Their conduct implied no one in church was competent to judge**
  - b. (6) **Their appearance before unbelievers exposed Christian disunity to the lost**
6. What surprising alternative does Paul pose in v. 7? **That they "suffer wrong," i.e., simply give up their rights for the sake of the gospel**
7. What else does Paul say they were doing to each other? (8) **actually defrauding one another — behaving like lost people**
8. If the Corinthians were behaving like the unrighteous, what should they remember about the fate of the unrighteous? (9-10) **The unrighteous are excluded from the Kingdom of God**
9. What was the true state of the Corinthian believers, and what does this suggest? (11) **They were converted, they were able to settle these disputes "in house" rather than take them to secular judges.**

"We should become what we are in our practice because of what Jesus Christ has done for us in our position. This appeal runs throughout the New Testament, and it underlies every exhortation to pursue godliness. It is especially strong in this epistle. Rather than assuming that believers will not continually practice sin the inspired writers constantly warned us of that possibility."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), 1Co 6.11.

“After I had come to Southern California as a pastor, I was rather amazed one day when a man came in quite excitedly and wanted to bring a charge against an officer of the church. He claimed this man had beat him out of a sum of money in a business deal. He said, ‘Now I want you to bring him up before the board and to make him settle with me.’ I told him, ‘I think you are approaching this the right way. When can you appear before the board and make your charges?’ ‘Oh,’ he said, ‘I’ve told you about it. That is all that is necessary.’ I pointed out to him that I had no way to verify the charge. It would be necessary for both men to appear before the board. Then I asked him, ‘Would you be willing to accept the verdict of the board?’ ‘Well,’ he said, ‘it all depends on how they decided it. If they decided in my favor, I would accept it.’ So then I asked him if he would accept the verdict if it were against him, and he assured me that he would not. Of course, I told him that we might as well forget the whole matter. I said, ‘You are not really willing to turn this issue over to other believers for a verdict.’<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible Commentary*, v. 5, electronic ed., vol. 5 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 27–28.