

SERIES: PRESCRIPTIONS FOR A HEALTHY & HOLY CHURCH:
A Study in 1 Corinthians Applied To The Church Today
II. DEALING WITH OBVIOUS DISEASES
C.) COMPLICATIONS FROM MALPRACTICE
(1 Cor. 6:1-11)

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INTRODUCTION:

We've been exploring, through Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth, what it means and takes to be a healthy and holy church. To help our understanding and application, we have been looking at the church through the prism of its analogy as the Body of Christ. Of course in our society, day and age, you can't talk about medical prognosis and treatment without sooner or later dealing with the threat and even reality of malpractice complaints!

Where there are accusations of malpractice, there are of course lawyers. And, where there are lawyers, there are of course . . . jokes:

Ken Morley, a burly construction worker, watched in horror as the heavy beam fell from the crane and landed on a well-dressed passerby. Morley rushed to the victim, carefully removed the beam, and said, "*Hang in there, fellow. Are you badly hurt?*" "*How should I know?*" snapped the victim. "*I'm a doctor not a lawyer.*"

Divorce lawyer: "*I have succeeded in making a settlement with your spouse that's completely fair to both of you.*"

Client: "*Fair to both of us! I could have done that myself. Why do you think I hired a lawyer?*"

Will Rogers used to quip, "*The minute you read something you can't understand, you can almost be sure it was drawn up by a lawyer.*"

In the mid-90s the top news story was about Theodore Kaczynski, who sought to end technological advances by terrorizing people with bombs in their mail. After being exposed and arrested, Kaczynski became something of a criminal celebrity and the lawyers all lined up to represent him. At this time, Jay Leno commented: "*Lawyers are writing to the Unabomber. They want to represent him on book and movie deals, and officials are trying to put a stop to it. I say if lawyers are giving the Unabomber their return addresses, don't ruin a good thing. Here's a problem that can take care of itself.*"

So, if we all know and laugh at the problems, corruption and ineptitude of the secular justice system, why is it that so many Christians seek to resolve their disputes through such a system rather than within the church?

This is a problem for us today, and it was a problem for the young Corinthian church. Let us then, learn and be the wiser together!

PRAYER

1.) THE BELIEVER'S **COURTROOM** (vv. 1-3)

A.) The **Challenge** (v. 1)

- Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, begins this section by once again challenging an error of immaturity on the part of the Corinthian Christians.
- As before, he uses a specific example but focuses his admonition upon the whole church body.
- The central issue Paul strongly raises is this: **How dare any Christian trust in the judgments and discernments of an unbeliever – no matter the position or training – over that of one of our own brothers and sisters filled with the Holy Spirit?**
- Judged for **what**? Any civil dispute.
- Judged by **whom**? Any believer.
- Judged **how**? Any manner – formal or informal, openly or secretly, in the offender's presence or behind the offender's back! *Yes, gossip IS a form of judging, however we may try to rationalize it.*

B.) The **Capability** (vv 2-3)

- Paul continues the challenge with an important and often forgotten reality.
- **Who, on this earth, is really most capable of judging a dispute?**
- **The unrighteous** *who do NOT know, understand, value or hold commitment to God's words of truth and righteousness?* The unsaved who put man's laws and reasoning above those of the Lord God Almighty – Creator of Heaven and Earth?
- **OR, the righteous** *who – filled with the Holy Spirit – DO know, understand, value & hold commitment to God's words of truth and righteousness?*
- To put it another way, which is more important: one's training, qualifications and appointment by men OR one's training, qualifications and appointment in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit?
- After all, does not God's Scripture reveal that ALL of his redeemed people are to one day judge the world and even the angels?
- **(Dan. 7:22; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude v.6)**
- If that is our future, should we not now – in the power and knowledge of the Holy Spirit and God's Word – be able to settle cases on earth between one another?
- And, is it not true that to do otherwise is to declare to everyone that the world is more capable of understanding and judging truth and righteousness than God's own redeemed and set-apart people?
- Do or should the unrighteous who reject and rebel against God have authority over them – especially in areas of declaring what is true and just?

2.) THE BELIEVER'S **ARBITRATOR** (vv. 4-6)

- The answer to the question of capability, Paul boldly declares and explains, is the believers.
- Even the most limited of believers, implies Paul, is a better judge of a brother or sister than the most qualified and impressive non-believer!

- Are God's people really so lacking in wisdom that not one can arbitrate according to God's Word and will? Can we not place more trust in our brothers and sisters in Christ for such things than in those still living in darkness?
- *What utter, despicable shame! What message do we send to the world about our faith, our Savior and our Counselor when we take our disputes before the ungodly? What message do we send about ourselves when we reject godly and Scriptural counsel in favor of the ungodly?*

3.) EVERYBODY **LOSES** (vv. 7-10)

- “*Therefore . . . total defeat*”!!!
- Whenever Christians seek to share, complain about or settle their disputes in the public square, EVERYBODY LOSES. The offended, the offender, the church Body, the lost and the unsaved. EVERYBODY!
- **The offended** brings shame to him/herself, receives ungodly advice and judgment (even if in one's temporal favor), creates a wedge in the church, and brings public shame to God's name and people.
- **The offender** is less likely to righteously accept the judgment of the ungodly and therefore to be able to move forward in any true repentance, reconciliation or right spirit – and has clearly lost a brother or sister.
- **The church** is given a mark of shame, incompetence and impotence in the community where they live and have been appointed to shine God's light.
- **The unsaved** see in such actions a people representing God and His Word who do not themselves truly trust in either and can't even get along with one another. They are thus more likely to reject Christ and suffer the ultimate condemnation.
- *People of God, are we even considering such things before we take our disagreements, dissatisfaction, arguments and hurts outside of the church and lay them in whatever form before unbelievers?*
- **If we truly strive to love God absolutely and love others sacrificially (especially our brothers and sisters in Christ), then shouldn't we be doing everything possible and necessary to avoid just this sort of thing?**
- *Shouldn't we even be willing to offer personal loss as a sacrifice unto the Lord and the benefit of others?*

– Dr. Ironside tells a story from his childhood we should all remember:

“Many years ago as a little fellow I attended a meeting in Toronto where some difficulty had come up between brethren and they did as the apostle suggests. My dear mother took me along . . . and I well remember how horrified I was to see men I esteemed and had been taught to respect apparently so indignant with each other. I can remember one man springing to his feet and with clenched fists saying, ‘I will put up with a good deal, but one thing I will not put up with, I will not allow you to put anything over on me; I will have my rights!’ An old Scotch brother who was rather hard of hearing leaned forward holding his ear and said, ‘What was that, brother? I did not get that!’ ‘I say, I will have my rights,’ said the man. ‘But you did not mean that; did you? Your rights? If ye had your rights, you would be in hell; wouldn't you? And you are forgetting - aren't you? - that Jesus did not come to get His rights, He came to get His wrongs, and He got them.’ I can still see the man standing there for a moment like one transfixed,

and then the tears broke from his eyes and he said, 'Brethren, I have been all wrong. Handle this case as you think best,' and he sat down and put his face in his hands and sobbed before the Lord, and everything was settled in three minutes. When in this spirit it is so easy to clear things up; when we bow before the Lord, He straightens them out."

(First Epistle to the Corinthians, pp. 184-185)

– **1 Peter 2:19-21**

4.) RESOLUTION COMES FROM LIVING THE NEW LIFE (v. 11)

- **You were, but then . . .**
- Has not God done this great work in your life and that of your brother and sister in Christ?
- Are you still the world's? Is the Devil still your father? Or do you belong to God, adopted by His grace?
- Now, notice the order of Paul's description of what God has done in the lives of us who have believed upon Jesus the Christ:
- **Washed** by the blood (sacrifice) of Christ and made clean before God.
- **Sanctified** – empowered and led by the Holy Spirit through the continual process of being re-made greater and purer in the image of Christ.
- **Justified** according to the Law before the Lawgiver and Judge of the universe.
- **This IS our reality in Christ. Therefore, start living like it and stop living like the wicked in their myriad sins!**
- As Ray Stedman writes: *"... he (Paul) is saying that if you have experienced Christian conversion, it should make a marked difference in the way you live your life. If it doesn't, then people have a right to question whether your conversion is genuine or not."*

(Letters To A Troubled Church, 1 and 2 Corinthians, pg. 89.)

CONCLUDING CHALLENGE: BIBLICAL RESOLUTION