

# 1 Corinthians 6:1-8

## A Symptom of a Larger Problem

Have you ever had this experience – you hear a little noise coming from your car.

A) You think - not a big deal – but think I'd better checked out

B) You take it to a mechanic only to discover – the little noise was just a symptom of a bigger problem

B) Or that little pain in your back – go to the doctor – Discover – the little pain was a symptom of a much bigger problem

C) In the passage before us tonight Paul addressed a squeak in Corinth.

1) Some believers in the church were taking one another to court before unbelievers.

D) But that problem was just a symptom of something much worse.

1) that being that the Corinthians neither understood nor lived out the gospel.

Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? 2 Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? ESV trivial cases 3 Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? 4 If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge? 5 I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren? 6 But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers! 7 Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated? 8 No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren!

We have between 80 and 90 million lawsuits filed every year in this country. 70% of the world's lawyers are in America.

A) The litigious nature of our society does creep into the church.

B) It also happened in Paul's church in Corinth, where Christians were suing each other.

C) Make for an awkward prayer meeting – Prayer need? Court – being sued

1) Next guy – going to court – had to sue –  
AWKWARD

How should Christians handle business disputes and personal matters of this nature?

A) Is it wrong for Christians to take each other to court?

B) Tonight as we unpack this passage – I want to point out 4 reasons why going to court against another Christian should not be our first option

C) But I want to first preface this by saying – Paul is talking here about disputes and sins – not crimes

1) Important that we understand the difference

If someone professing to be a Christian – commits a crime against you

A) You have an obligation to notify the authorities

B) That is what they are there for. – The Church is not here to deal with crimes

C) Rape, Molestation, murder, call the Police – if you don't we will. - **Obligation to report those things**

D) But civil matter – don't call the police

1) Report a gossip

E) So again what Paul is dealing with here is not Criminal matters but more along the lines of civil disputes – civil court cases

1) V.2 the smallest matters? ESV trivial cases

4 reasons why going to court against another Christian over civil matters should not be our first option:

A) #1 Because of our identity in Christ

B) Notice that twice in this passage – Paul refers to the identity of the believers as Saints 2x in v.1-2

C) Why does he use the phrase Saints – and not believers or Christians?

1) Aren't saints – dead people – Catholic Church

D) Saints are the ones the light shines through

**Why Saints: Paul is referring back to his original introduction to them in Ch 1 – Turn for a minute**

Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,  
2 To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, **called to be saints**, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:

**Note this: One of Paul's strategies in dealing with the problems in the church in Corinth was to remind them of who they were.**

A) His challenge: Be who you are in Jesus - instead of who you used to be in the flesh – **prior to knowing Jesus**

B) So in Chapter 1 He reminded them – Called to be Saints = set apart ones

**C) Called out of something – THE WORLD  
Called into something – The Family of God –  
called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord**

D) Called out of the World and into the BIG C – CHURCH – the family of God.

E) So The first thing that Paul is reminding them of is the fact that they are connected in a huge way.-

Turn back to chapter 6

**AND In v.6 Similar note - Paul also reminds them they are brothers and sisters in the Lord**

A) They share the intimacy of belonging to the same spiritual family,

B) and their loyalty to that family ought to outweigh their desire not to be defrauded.

C) So their first option should not be to go outside that family to settle these disputes.

D) So #1 Because of their identity in Christ

**#2 Because of our future calling V.2-5**

A) The Saints will judge the world and Angels

B) Now Paul seems to anticipate the objection that Christians were not competent to judge such legal or civil matters,

**C) Paul wondered, with a note of sarcasm, if the Corinthians had forgotten that the saints will judge the world and Angels?**

D) Paul is referring to something here that Jesus discussed in Matthew 19:28

1) regarding the apostles Judging with Christ

**But in Daniel 7:22 – speaking of the last days as well as Revelation 20:4**

A) Both passages extend this idea to all the saints –

B) we are going to have a role to play in the millennial reign of Jesus.

1) 2 Timothy 2:12 this promise – **if we endure, we shall also reign with him**

C) So On the basis of the church's future role in such important matters,

1) Paul argued that the body of Christ should also be competent to judge trivial cases

D) Things regarding worldly disputes between Christians things pertaining to this life.

**Now I know that lawsuits may not seem trivial when they involve huge sums of money,**

A) But such disputes are trivial when compared to the weightiness of the final eternal judgment

**B) Question: Why would we be equipped now to Judge,**

1) when the millennial Kingdom happens after we have been glorified?

C) I think the answer to that question points back to what Paul had already said them in Chapter 2

1) about the wisdom of God vs wisdom of the world

<sup>2:6</sup> However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. <sup>7</sup> But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, <sup>8</sup> which none of the rulers of this age knew; for

had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory

**D)The wisdom of God and the ways of God are different from the world**

<sup>2:12</sup> Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

**I think what Paul says here in Chapter 2 this applies to this argument:**

**A)We have received the wisdom of God through the Spirit of God and the scriptures**

**B)And that wisdom can enable us to discern these matters now**

**C)That argument would also infer that the secular law of the land enacted by unbelievers**

1)was inferior to God's wisdom for judging disputes between believers.

**Christians, however, know that the gospel is supremely wise.**

**A)Because the gospel includes things like unity in Christ and forgiveness, which worldly standards of justice ignore,**

**B)Therefore the secular law of unbelievers is not equipped to adjudicate disputes between Christians.**

**C)Unbelieving human law simply does not reflect true wisdom, godliness, or justice.**

**So taking another believer to court in civil matters should not be our first option**

- #1 Because of our identity in Christ
- #2 Because of our future calling V.2-5

**#3 6-7a Because of our witness in the world**

6 But **brother** goes to law against **brother**, and that before **unbelievers!**

7 Now therefore, it is already **an utter failure** for you that you go to law against one another.

**A)Paul says this is an utter failure – Why?**

**B)It is a poor witness – When Christians are considering to pursue arbitration, mediation or secular jurisprudence,**

1)they should first consider what is in the best interest of the Gospel, and how this will reflect on Jesus and their church.

**C)See Anyone who brings a lawsuit against another person intends to win.**

1)But because public lawsuits between Christians damage the church's witness and reputation, those who participate in them cannot win.

**D)You might win the case – but the gospel loses, our Christian witness loses**

**E)Hey look what Jesus – did in my life – come join us.**

**1)Why I was at that court case –BRUTAL - you guys are no different than the rest of us.**

**F)We lose are ability to impact the world.**

**So taking another believer to court in civil matters should not be our first option**

- #1 Because of our identity in Christ
- #2 Because of our future calling V.2-5
- #3 6-7a Because of our witness in the world

**#4 Because there is a higher law of love we are called to live by V.7b-8**

Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated? <sup>8</sup> No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren!

**A)The fact that there were lawsuits in the church demonstrated that the Corinthians had lost sight of some of the most precious principles by which they were to live.**

**B)Christ taught his church the law of love (James. 2:8). <sup>8</sup> If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself,"**

**C)By your Love they will know you are my disciples John 13;35**

**But what about My rights?**

**A)Jesus taught and exemplified that we should be willing to die to our rights in order to Bless others**

<sup>3</sup> Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.

<sup>4</sup> Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

<sup>5</sup> You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

<sup>6</sup> Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to.

<sup>7</sup> Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being.

When he appeared in human form, <sup>8</sup> he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.

Philippians 2:3-8

**B) Jesus said if anyone wants to be my disciple they need to deny themselves and pick up their cross and follow me. –**

**C) Pick up the cross is symbolic – for dedicating our lives to seek to live in the same manner as Jesus in – our relationships**

**D) Marriage. -Husbands love as Christ loved the Church**

- 1) Friendships – preferring others –
- 2) Enemies forgiving -

<sup>13</sup> For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. Galatians 5:13

**Christians are called to a higher law – the law of love – where we seek to serve one another**

**A) For these reasons, and to protect the church, Paul says it would be better to be wronged and cheated than to struggle and fight with one another.**

**B) Now I know that can be a hard pill to swallow. –**

**C) But if we are seeing things from the big picture**

**1) Gospel – the cause of Christ in the world – I think it makes sense**

**So taking another believer to court in civil matters should not be our first option because**

- #1 Because of our identity in Christ
- #2 Because of our future calling V.2-5
- #3 6-7a Because of our witness in the world
- #4 Because there is a higher law of love we are called to live by V.7b-8

**But what does this look like in the church Practically**

**A) Turn to Matthew 18**

<sup>15</sup> “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. Great done-resolved <sup>16</sup> But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that *‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’* Brothers and sisters <sup>17</sup> And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it to the church.* Leadership - I will say this: Points 1-2 are often bypassed – straight to the leadership of the church – If it's me – I will open to Matthew and say – did you do number 1-2 ? Do that first

**But notice what Jesus said- if he doesn't hear you – and will not listen to other brothers and sisters in the Church – go to the leaders**

**A) If he doesn't listen to them – Jesus says - But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.**

**B) Now a lot of people take that to mean that we are supposed to kick them out of the church –**

**1) excommunicate them**

**C) However I believe that is the wrong interpretation – This is why?**

**1) How are we supposed to treat heathen and tax collectors?**

**D) How did Jesus treat them?**

**1) He Loved them, reached out to them – Zacchaeus – your house, lunch today**

**E) He prayed for them and sought to win them to the gospel.**

**So I think Jesus is saying treat them like an unbeliever – this is a heart issue a soul issue. –**

**A) I think that gets communicated – by the leadership – you are in the wrong –**

B) Treat you like an unbeliever - praying your heart will change

C) Doesn't mean that you can't come to church here 1) but you can't serve - can't be involved in leadership and ministry -

D) And in the context of 1 Corinthians 6 interesting

1) I also believe - that if you followed Matthew 18 - they refused to follow the instruction of leadership

**E) You would be fine to take them to court**

**Example: Leadership said - You were in the wrong - you need to make restitution -**

A) Let's say that person said - NO Way - not doing it

B) Ok treat them like an unbeliever and you might need to prayerfully consider suing them.

C) That has actually happened here

**But Pastor Rob - that is a lot of steps - a lot of time - I don't want to wait for that**

A) If we are going to live like Jesus - that is part of our Sacrifice.

B) What a testimony in a court of law to be able to say: **This is everything I went through to try and resolve this issue peaceably -**

C) Testimonies of other believers - leadership of the Church

1) That I believe can actually be a testimony to the gospel - and Jesus

**So we close tonight - this problem of suing other believers was a symptom of a greater problem in Corinth**

A) The believers in Corinth - had forgotten about their identity in Jesus- Saints

**B) They had forgotten about their future calling and present equipping**

1) Filled with the Spirit of God and Wisdom of God

C) They had forgotten about their calling to be a witness in the world

D) They had forgotten that we are called to walk in a higher law - the Law of love

May we not be guilty of making the same mistake.