

Chapter 6

Christians and the law courts 6:1-8

v1 Suppose that one of you has a reason to complain against another Christian. You may take your problem to the pagan law courts. But you should go to God's people. v2 You must know that one day God's people will judge the world. And if you are to judge the world, you should be able to deal with such small matters. v3 You must know that we shall judge angels. Then we should be able to judge the things of this life even more. v4 If you have such arguments, appoint members of the church to be judges. They should not be very important members! v5 I write this to make you ashamed. There must be a single wise man among you able to judge matters between Christians. v6 Instead, one Christian goes to court against another Christian. And this happens in front of people who do not believe! v7 Because you have taken another Christian to court, you have already lost the battle. It would be better to suffer wrong instead. It would be better to allow other people to cheat you. v8 Instead you cheat and do wrong. And you cheat your Christian brothers and sisters.

Verse 1 The Greeks very much liked to go to the law courts. It was like entertainment for them. Some of the Greeks had brought this habit into the Christian church. Paul heard that a Christian in Corinth was taking another Christian to a pagan law court. Paul was disgusted. The Jews usually settled things in front of the important men in their village. Or they took the problem to the important men in a synagogue. They thought that it was wrong to go to a pagan law court. As a Jew, and even more as a Christian, Paul believed that this legal action was wrong.

Verses 2-3 Paul said that one day Christians would judge both other people and angels. So it was not sensible to use human law courts to deal with small quarrels.

Verse 4 Christians should appoint other members of the church to decide what was right. They should choose Christians who were not important. Paul's words seem like a command. So he is probably reminding them that they should be humble. They are wrong to think that one Christian is more important than another Christian. But other people have translated the sentence like this: 'I do not know how you can let people outside the church judge. Their opinions are not very important for Christians.'

Verse 5 Paul makes fun of the Christians at Corinth who are so proud of their wisdom. He wonders if they can find even one wise man to make a decision about the quarrel.

Verse 6 Pagans will see that Christians are going to court. Then, the pagans will think that Christian behaviour is no different from their own.

Verses 7-8 Whatever the result of the matter, the legal action means that people will have a bad opinion about the church. Jesus had said that Christians must defeat evil things with good deeds (Matthew 5:44). So, the person who has gone to court is failing as a Christian. To go to law courts at all was to forget that they were brothers and sisters in the Christian family. Paul uses the word 'cheat'. So the quarrel may have been about a business matter. But any quarrel should give the opportunity to show the power of Christian love.

A list of sins 6:9-11

v9 You must know that wicked people will not have a place in the future kingdom of God. Make no mistake. None of these will possess the kingdom of God: those guilty of sexual sins and those who worship idols; those who break their marriage promises, male prostitutes and homosexuals; v10 thieves, greedy people and those who drink too much alcohol; people who tell lies and cheat other people. v11 And that is what some of you were. But God has made you spiritually clean. God has set you apart to live in a good way. The Lord Jesus Christ has made you right with God. The Spirit of God has made this change in you.

There are other lists of wrong acts in other letters. They all show the kind of society in which Paul lived. They show what some people are like. People are like this when they do not accept God and his laws.

Verse 9 Paul warns the Christians in Corinth about their behaviour. If they continue to sin, they are in danger of judgement. God will judge them in the same way as he will judge non-Christians. God will refuse to keep them in his kingdom.

In Corinth, people worshipped Aphrodite, the female god of love. Their worship included much wrong sexual behaviour. Also, many people did not remain a loyal husband or a loyal wife.

‘Male prostitutes’ translates a Greek word that means ‘soft’. Probably it describes boys and young men who acted like women. They allowed older men to use them for their sexual pleasure. ‘Homosexuals’ describes people of the same sex who have sex with each other. In the Roman world, both these forms of behaviour were common. Even the Roman rulers did these things.

Verse 10 Greedy people can become thieves or those who cheat other people. There were many people like this in Corinth.

In those days, the water was not good. So the Greeks mixed wine with their water. In Corinth, there were people who drank too much alcohol. They thought only about their own pleasure.

To tell lies and to speak evil words about other people are serious sins. They make it difficult for people to trust each other and to be part of society.

Verse 11 Some Christians had been like all these wicked people. But they had become better. The water used to baptise them had shown that they wanted to change. God had made them his own people. The Lord Jesus Christ, by his death on the cross, had brought them into right relations with God. God’s Spirit had caused them to become new people. So, Paul uses these words to encourage them to live properly as Christians. That would show that their faith was sincere.

Wrong sexual behaviour 6:12-20

v12 You say ‘I am free to do anything.’ Yes, but not everything is good for me. ‘I am free to do anything’. But I, myself, will not let anything control me. v13 ‘Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food’, you say. But one day God will destroy them both. God did not intend the body for sexual sins. He intended it for the Lord. And the Lord is for the body. v14 God raised our Lord from death by his power. He will also raise us up. v15 You must know that your bodies are parts of the body of Christ himself. I can never take parts of Christ’s body and unite them with a prostitute. v16 Everyone who joins himself with a prostitute becomes one body with her. You must know that. Scripture says, ‘The two people will become one body.’ v17 But he who unites himself with Christ becomes one person with him in his spirit.

v18 Keep far away from sexual sins. Every other sin that a person practises is outside the body. But the person who is guilty of a sexual sin acts in a wrong way against his own body. v19 You must know that your body is a temple for the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit in you is God's gift to you. You do not belong to yourselves. v20 Christ paid a great price to save you. So, use your body in a way that gives honour to God.

Verses 12-13 The Greeks taught that the spirit alone mattered. The body was not important. So they could act in any way at all and it would not hurt their spirit. It was natural to eat. And it was natural to satisfy their sexual desires. Paul had also taught that Christians are free from the law's demands. So some Christians were continuing to visit prostitutes after baptism. Corinth was a city so well-known for sexual sin that a 'girl from Corinth' meant a prostitute. So it was very easy for Christians to sin in this way. And it was very easy to find excuses for this behaviour.

Christian freedom does not mean that Christians are free to sin. Paul reminded them about that. What they chose to do must be helpful to them. It must also be helpful to other people. It was wrong to be like a slave to their former way to live.

Verse 14 The body belongs to God. By his power, God raised Jesus from death. By the same power, he will raise both spirit and

body to be alive. God intends the whole person for eternal life in the future.

Verses 15-17 Scripture says in Genesis 2:24 that a sexual act between two people makes them into one united body. Christians are part of Christ's body, the church. So for a Christian to give his body to a prostitute was a terrible sin. He must unite himself with Christ in a permanent unity of spirit.

Verse 18 The Christians at Corinth may have said that sin was in the mind rather than in the body. Paul said that sexual sin was against the person's own body. It is true that to drink too much alcohol or to take drugs are sins against the body. But God wants to save Christians' bodies and souls. So Paul explained that other sins do not affect a person's body in the same way as sexual sins do.

Verse 19-20 The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit whom God has given us. Therefore, the body is holy, set apart for God. Christ died to save a person's whole nature, both body and soul. So, a person is not free to do as he likes with his body. It belongs to Christ. Therefore, he must use his body in the way that God wants. He must give honour to God.

The second part of Paul's letter, chapters 7-15, deals with problems that the Christians in Corinth had asked Paul about.

Chapter 7 deals with various questions about marriage and sexual relations.

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