

“I Speak to Your Shame”

1 Corinthians 6:1-8

This phrase in verse five is to be understood that not only was the Apostle Paul writing to them about the shame of what it they were doing (in this case, using the courts for their own gain), but it was with a view to their shame (Vincent), with the intent of shaming them into changing their attitude and actions in relation to their past life (as will be seen in the next several verses of this chapter).

These verses are part of a greater context that goes through verse 11. That’s important as it gives us an idea of the damage that can be done to the testimony of a church, and of the Lord, by being as worldly-minded as the Corinthian believers were. Remember that this text is written to believes in the church – not to the unsaved. That is also important in the greater context here.

This was a big enough deal at the time, and in the context of Corinth, and its corruptive influence on society for the Holy Spirit to inspire Paul to write about it in a letter. It would seem that someone either in the church, or another leader from another church (in another city), sent Paul a letter with this issue as a concern.

Although the concern dealt with was a believer suing another believer in a public court for some wrong done him (whether real or perceived, didn’t really matter), the great concern was summed up in verse seven where Paul asks them if it would not have been better for them just to have suffered the wrong rather than dragging the name of Christ “through the mud,” so to speak.

I. THE PRESENTATION OF THE PROBLEM – VS. 1

A. *The brashness of the people – “dare any of you”*

1. The word for “dare” carries the idea of boldness in the manner of being brash – “Are you so bold...” – “Are you so brash...”
2. Paul is “dumbfounded” upon hearing of the church members going to court with one another, just like they did in the past before their conversion. His amazement is found in this phrase.

B. *The brokenness it caused – “having a matter”*

1. The “matter” dealt with would be a civil matter, most commonly dealing with a property dispute or issue similar to that.
2. This isn’t speaking of a criminal matter – that would have been out of their control and contradict other Scripture, for that matter.

C. *The burden to the church – “go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints”*

1. Within the context of the letter written to the church, it is most likely dealing with an issue within the church and related to something spiritual.
2. The culture of Corinth would have made it easy for them to take the matter to the court and make a public show out of the thing. It was done, quite often, to draw attention and to gain recognition for

oneself.

II. THE PREDICAMENT IT PRESENTED – VS. 2-6

A. They should have known their position – vs. 2-3

1. Both in Christ while still on earth and in the future as they rule with Christ – the believer's position in the future is one of authority – something they should have known
2. "Do ye not know" – vs. 2a
 - a) This phrase (or similar) is found six times in this one chapter alone – vs. 2, 3, 9, 15, 16, 19
 - b) This is speaking to the church as a whole ("ye") – not just to one particular person
 - c) This is something they should have known already – it was something they were already taught, apparently; or, at the very least, something they should have known from other Scripture, and the teachings of Jesus Himself

(1) Daniel spoke of it – 7:18

Daniel 7:18

18 But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.

(2) Zechariah spoke of it – 14:5

Zechariah 14:5

5 And ye shall flee to the valley of the

mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.

(3) *Jesus spoke of it – Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:30*

Matthew 19:28

28 And Jesus said unto them, **Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**

Luke 22:30

30 **That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**

(4) *Paul spoke of it to the Thessalonians – 1 Thess. 3:13*

1 Thessalonians 3:13

13 To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

(5) *It was spoken of in the later epistles in the New Testament – Jude 1:14-15; Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21; 20:4*

3. "The saints shall judge the world" (vs. 2b)
- speaks of ruling and reigning with Christ

during the Millennial Reign (see above texts).

4. "And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest of matters?" (vs. 2c) – If we are one day going to be in authority over the people of this earth (in the Millennium), then why would we go before them now to seek their judgment in these small matters – especially in matters that clearly relate to the church (which is the directive of the passage)?
5. "We shall judge angels" - Vs. 3 is a puzzling verse, and one that is somewhat difficult, with a wide variety of interpretations.
 - a) "Know ye not" – again, this is something they should have already known. This point is not as clear in Scripture that they would have had access to at the time, but it would be safe to say that it was something that they would have been taught by Paul and Apollos (Job 4:18 and context is one passage pointing to this).
 - b) It is unclear what this refers to exactly, but it would seem, within the context, that the simplest explanation is best – we will have authority over angels in the world yet to come. How and why that takes place is unclear, but since the angels are even now considered to be "ministering spirits" (Heb. 1:13-14), it would seem that they will continue to be that in eternity to come.

[Hebrews 1:13-14](#)

¹³ But to which of the angels said he at

any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?

¹⁴ Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

- c) Many, including those involved in the translating of the Geneva Bible (in the 16th century), consider this to be speaking of fallen angels (or devils) but that would be outside the rest of Scripture. There is no time in the future where anyone, other than God Himself, is seen in judgment of fallen angels (and that took place in eternity past), and there is no reference to the church involved at all.
- d) Consider that this was something the church was to already have known about – either from other Scripture or Paul’s direct teaching – so it is most likely speaking of the authority we will have in eternity future.
- e) The issue of “judging” puts us in mind of ruling over or passing sentence, but that is not the view here. It’s only referring to the position of authority over someone. Adam Clarke sees the “angels” here as false prophets that we, as leadership in the church, and the church as a whole, will rule as to their affairs and judge them as false. That seems to be a stretch, but it is worth mentioning. Although the word “angel” does simply mean “messenger” (and is seen in the sense of the “pastor” in Rev. 2 in the message to the seven churches), the context of the passage indicates its right interpretation.
- f) Considering the previous verse here, the

context is clearly speaking of the future reign of Christ, and on into eternity – so that would be where we must place verse 3. “We must take the plain meaning of the apostle’s words, whether we can throw any light on his conceptions or not” (Pulpit Commentary).

B. There should have been a procedure to deal with matters of the church within the church – vs. 4-5

1. Vs. 4 - If there is an issue that needs an arbitrator, or a judge, to decide and pass sentence, then, in comparative terms, the issues at hand should be able to be dealt with by someone in the church that holds no position of authority, and is considered to not be of the highest caliber (someone that would not be chosen for a position of judge). It’s not belittling anyone in the church – Paul is just pointing out that, in relation to the real issues of life, and compared to the need to get the gospel to the world, whatever issue had come up in the church at Corinth that warranted this portion of the letter was trivial to the point of being able to be decided by someone without credentials. The point is, deal with the issue and move on.

This implies an utter scorn of trivial quarrels about personal rights. Surely the lowliest, the most unregarded members of the Church—those of no account—have wisdom enough to decide in such small matters. Thus when there arose a murmuring between Hebrews and Hellenists about the daily distribution to widows, the apostles, thinking that they had much more important work in

hand than the adjustment of such jealousies, left the whole matter in the hands of the seven deacons. Some understand "those held of no account in the Church" to mean heathens; but he is here forbidding them to bring their quarrels before the heathens. Of course, ideally, none ought to be "despised" or "held of no account" in the Church; but St. Paul is here speaking relatively, and with reference to the views of the Corinthians themselves, and not without irony. The perfect participle, "those who have been set at nought," perhaps means persons of proved inferiority of judgment. (Pulpit Commentary)

2. Vs. 5 goes with verse 4 – Paul says here that, in the previous verse, he was speaking to their "shame."
 - a) Only other time that word is used is 15:34.

[1 Corinthians 15:34](#)

³⁴ Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.
 - b) As pointed out at the beginning of this message, Paul is saying, "I speak this with the intent to shame you, to move you to shame, to cause you to change your intent and actions." It was a disgrace that the issue was causing so much trouble in the church, and the community, that he wanted them to understand the insignificance of the matter in the greater work of Christ.
 - c) He says in this verse that they should have been able to find a "wise man" – someone who was actually qualified within the church (most likely, referring to the

leadership of the church – the pastor should be the one to do this but they had shown themselves to be less than honest in their dealings in the community – ch. 5). These matters needed dealt with, yes, but within the confines of the church, not dragging the name of Christ through the “mud” of society.

C. They should never have gotten to that place – vs. 6

1. Again, we sense Paul’s anguish in this seemingly simple matter – they should have known better.
2. Verse six lays the groundwork for verse seven, as well as gives an overall summary of the whole context here – “brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers” – in case there was any doubt as to what is being dealt with.

III. THE PROPER ATTITUDE TO PURSUE – VS. 7-8

These verses are really the focal point of the context, as well as the application for us today, both in this matter of taking church-related matters before an unbelieving, worldly court, as well as any public matter that would cause reproach upon the name of Christ.

A. They fell short of the mark of their calling and gifts in Christ – 7a

1. “Now therefore”
 - a) Based upon the analogy given in the text preceding this, Paul is pointing out that

there is a problem.

- b) The NASB translates this as "Actually, then" – the ASV as "Nay, already" – the BBE as "More than this" – the LITV as "Indeed, then"

2. "There is utterly a fault among you"

- a) "Utterly" – altogether, looking at the question as a whole (Pulpit Commentary). Barnes says, "you are entirely wrong in this thing."

- b) "A fault"

(1) Translated in Rom. 11:12 as "diminishing" (only other time it is used in the New Testament)

Romans 11:12

12 Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?

(2) Not as strong a word as the one used for "sin," but speaks of "a shortcoming – your going to law at all is a falling short of your high privileges, not to say your doing so before unbelievers, which aggravates it" (J-F-B).

B. They failed to follow Christ in their attitude and actions – vs. 7b

1. "Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" – the defrauding was the wrong.

2. Jesus addressed this in the "Sermon on the Mount" – Matt. 5:40 – go the extra mile in dealing with controversies so as to not bring reproach on the name of Christ and on you, His servants. What is our testimony worth to us?

Matthew 5:40

⁴⁰ And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.

C. They were fraudulent in their dealings with others – vs. 8

1. This verse simply states that it is wrong to defraud someone, and especially a brother in Christ. This verse is to contrast the previous one. Instead of being willing to be defrauded and to be wronged for the sake of testimony, they were the ones doing the wrong, and defrauding others, as will be seen later in the chapter, because they felt they had the right to under the liberty they had in Christ.
2. The word "wrong" is the verb form of the word "unrighteous" in the next verse, and the word "unjust" in vs. 1. It means to act unjustly or injure someone. The defrauding – depriving someone of something that is there's – was the wrong being done.

Conclusion: There will be times when going to court against another believer will be inevitable, but those are going to be issues of civil law rather than biblical law. This text speaks to our attitude toward other

believers, and our willingness to be loving and kind toward others; as well as our attitude toward the Lord and obedience to His Word. If we are so ready and willing to make our life more important than others, and our rights more important than the Word of God, then what kind of Christian are we?

We need to be willing to take the wrong and be humble enough and meek enough to suffer the harm rather than “standing up for our rights,” so to speak.

I was asked one time if a Christian, and more specifically, a preacher, had a right to physically defend himself. The answer can be found in this text, to some extent. If it will cause shame on the name of Christ, we need to suffer the harm, and “turn the other cheek,” so the sake of the gospel.

Matthew 5:38–39

38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.