

# **Sermon: Judging the Church**

**Text: I Corinthians 6:1-11 ESV**

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**Introduction:** We started a discussion last week in **chapter 5** about judging. It was made clear at **verse 13** that God was responsible for judging the world, not us. You might remember these words: **I Corinthians 5:13 ESV** <sup>13</sup> God judges those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you.” This is talking about *before* Jesus’ return. So the church was even then being told by the Apostle when there was immorality in the church, the church should handle it. Paul will return to this problem within the church next week, right after we look at the problem of lawsuits against other believers in our text today.

If you look at what most lawsuits are about, you will generally find they are about power, greed, and sex. Sometimes these issues are all involved, but for us let’s talk about power and greed (money).

I remember just a few years ago now that Menlo Park Presbyterian Church in California paid, I think it was, 9 million dollars to get out of the PCUSA because of what they felt were very liberal and unbiblical positions in many areas. Over the last 40 years the denomination has went from 4 million to 2 million members - The Body of Christ

The UMC, formed in 1964 and has lost about 40% of its members - The Body of Christ  
Many churches now are paying huge amounts of money to disaffiliate from the denomination.

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), a denomination, has had a similar trajectory I am sure, in their loss of membership. The Churches of Christ and Christian Churches to whom we belong and who are independent left in the 60’s - The Body of Christ. And this happened in plain view of the world that is not yet a part of Christ’s Body.

Episcopal Churches - Convention attendees were told that they had spent \$18 million in a recent year suing their own local congregations — those which have protested the denomination’s policies by trying to secede. The New York hierarchy has consistently won in court – asserting that the local members signed over their buildings decades ago. As a result, some of the largest Episcopal congregations in the United States have been forced to vacate their buildings and meet elsewhere. So now, convention delegates were told, the denomination is the proud owner of scores of empty buildings nationwide – and liable for their upkeep in a depressed real estate market where empty church buildings are less than prime property. It’s the classic “dog in a manger.” The denomination has managed to keep the buildings – for which it has little use. However, they made their point – refusing to allow the congregations which built the facilities to have any benefit after generations of sacrifice, donations and volunteerism. I thought they were family!

Lust, greed and covetousness are certainly tied together, even the idea of idolatry. And even in the church there has always been a struggle between the rich and the poor and who might get special attention and power. **James 2:6-7 ESV** 6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? 7 Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?

For now, let's look at the Corinthian situation. Paul tells the church to:

## I. Handle Grievances Internally (vv. 1-4).

### A. Don't use unrighteous judges (v. 1). who are from the outside...

**I Corinthians 6:1 ESV** 1 When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints?

The word (πραγμα, Gr.) grievance (*dispute*, NIV; *matter*, KJV) was commonly used in the papyri to indicate a lawsuit or civil matter. The Jews (Essenes, too) felt the same way about settling disagreements outside the community. They felt it was unnecessary.

In **verse 1** the word “dare” is translated by Hering as “has the audacity.” - Leon Morris, p. 90 - “How dare you sir!” - GLW The (αδικοι) unrighteous (*ungodly*, NIV) are people who are Jews or heathens who might be sitting in judgment over Christians (saints).

You say: “well how many heathens could be involved here? In the 1st century Greek culture judging others in civil matters was a big event. In one such case in not-so-far-away Athens, history records 6000 jurors in on one case. And just like, today as the wheels of justice turn, many times it is the wealthy who win their cases.

Here, Paul says keep these disagreements inside the church, i.e. “Don't wash or air your dirty linen in public.” Show some propriety!

### B. The Church is better at judging (vv. 2-4).

**I Corinthians 6:2-4 ESV** 2 Or **do you not know** that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? 3 **Do you not know** that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life! 4 So if you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church?

Here begins Paul saying 6 times in this chapter: “Do you not know?” He is implying they should know better.

Paul is using an argument that goes from lesser to greater...We can see from Scriptures that we see a bit of a transition in the concept of judging. In the OT it was God who would judge humanity at the end of things, then Jesus (NT) and finally Christians are included in this tribunal as they are now “in Christ.”

**Luke 22:28-30 ESV** 28 “You are those who have stayed with me in my trials, 29 and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, 30 that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

So we will judge the unsaved of the world and even angels who have left their original estate. **Jude 6 ESV** 6 And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day—

In our text when Paul says trivial cases, I think he must be talking about anything short of eternal and final judgment, because while there is still breath in mankind there is an opportunity to be saved. Yet no one can time their natural death.

These cases are everyday concerns (**βιωτικά**) which in most cases can be even settled at home (Conzelmann). And he goes on to even say these arbiters could even be those who are not highly esteemed if appointed by the leaders with the Holy Spirit involved.

I have seen people who were much less talented than others be used by God for his glory.

**Illus.** John Torgerson and Matt Fallot as worship leaders and little children say what God was thinking and that needed to be heard. “Hosanna, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” (**John 12:13**)!

Paul further tells the church:

**II. Don’t Behave Shamefully (vv. 5-8).**

A. Wisdom can be found in the church (v. 5).

**I Corinthians 6:5 ESV** 5 I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers,

Here, the **NIV** translates “believers” while the **ESV** is, “brothers.” While the **NIV** is not wrong, in the Greek text it is literally “brothers.” I believe they were trying to produce a parallel by saying that believers *are* brothers/sisters - as the same word is used in v. 6 and there translated brother by both the **NIV** and **ESV**.

If there is to be a judge established for the dispute within the congregation he is to be wise. I think beyond that you would want someone full of the Holy Spirit and demonstrating the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

When Paul questions them about the availability of judges within the church: **“Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers,”** this drips with irony and sarcasm because Paul had said to the church: **I Corinthians 4:10 ESV** <sup>10</sup> We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute.

Don't behave shamefully:

**B. Brother against brother (v. 6)**

**I Corinthians 6:6 ESV** <sup>6</sup> but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers?

Paul is saying” **“UNBELIEVABLE!”** What a poor witness.

This is not necessarily a legal problem, but a spiritual issue.

To go to court against your brother, your family, another child of God, is such a poor example of forgiveness, mercy and love. Over 350 years before Christ, Plato even understood the principle. He had said, “the good man will always choose to suffer wrong rather than do wrong.”

Now Paul tells the church:

**C. Give up your rights (v. 7).**

**I Corinthians 6:7 ESV** <sup>7</sup> To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?

**Q. Does God want us to suffer, suffer loss?**

**A. Possibly, if it protects or elevates His name and reputation in the world (martyrs).**

**Q. Whenever we hurt another Christian, whom do we hurt?**

**A. Christ, the Head of the Church; His Body, the Church (corporate); and ourselves as a member of that Body, and our witness with the world for Christ suffers.**

**“Demanding one's rights remains diametrically opposed to Christ's teaching and example.” - Blomberg, p. 118**

**Matthew 5:39-42 ESV** 39 But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. 41 And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. 42 Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

**I Peter 2:23 ESV** 23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

I don't know about you, but does this sound like you most days?

**Philippians 2:2-3 ESV** 2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

**Illus.** Carl Bowman and Sherwood Products, Inc.

Paul further tells the church there should be:

**III. A Clear Distinction between Us and the World (vv. 8-11).**

A. Don't act like the world (v. 8).

**I Corinthians 6:8 ESV** 8 But you yourselves wrong and defraud—even your own brothers!

We must be better family than the world. **Steven Cole story:** “Dr. H. A. Ironside, recounts a story of an incident in his own life as a Christian. When he was only eight years old, or so, his mother took him to a meeting of the Brethren who were discussing some kind of difficulty among themselves. Evidently there was some terrible injustice that one felt others had done. Young Harry Ironside did not know what the trouble was, but it was clear they were deeply disturbed. He said that one man stood up and shook his fist and said, "I don't care what the rest of you do. I want my rights! That's all! I just want my rights!"

There was an old half-deaf Scottish brother sitting in the front row, and he cupped his hand behind his ear and asked this man, "Aye, brother, what's that ye say?" And the fellow said, "Well, all I said was that I want my rights. That's all." The old man said, "Your rights, brother, is that what you want, your rights? Why the Lord Jesus didn't come to get his rights. He came to get his wrongs, and he got them." Harry Ironside said, "I'll always remember how that fellow stood transfixed for a little while. Then he dropped his head and said, 'You're right, brother, you're right. Settle it any way you like.'" And in a few moments the whole thing was settled.”

**B. There is no future acting like the world (vv. 9-10).**

You might notice how **verse 9** begins and **10** ends! There is no future for the unrighteous in the Kingdom of God! **I Corinthians 6:9-10 ESV** **9** Or **do you not know** that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, **10** nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

Here again we have a catalog of sins (vices) that run counter to the qualities we should see in a Spirit-led Christian.

**Q. What do these sins have in common?**

**A. They are self-indulgent and self-serving.**

**Q. And what is wrong with looking to "only" your own interests?**

**A. God and others are left out of the equation mostly, or only called on for what you need. This kind of attitude also prevents personal salvation and the evangelization of the lost.**

**Q. So which is the greatest of all these sins? Is one more deadly than another?**

**A. Not really, because all the sins on this list and others found in Scripture will prevent you from going to heaven IF it becomes an "unrepentant" pattern of behavior in your life.**

**C. The Church left the world's behavior behind (v. 11).**

**I Corinthians 6:11 ESV** **11** And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

The idea of "washed" here could certainly be a reference to water baptism that is for the forgiveness of sins, being immersed/buried with Christ and raised to life in Christ. It could also be about the idea of a spiritual washing of conscience and heart that comes with water baptism and the gift of the Spirit of God. This is only possible by the Lord Jesus Christ's involvement and **the Holy Spirit of our God**.

God can change anyone, even the most hopeless, if that person will simply ask God to help him/her, and then obey Him.

At the time of your baptism you are forgiven and clean, so you are sanctified - made holy and counted righteous because of your new relationship with God through His precious Son, Jesus Christ.

**Conclusion:** There should always be a strong contrast between the world and the Church, between unrighteousness and righteousness. This right standing with God can only happen by faith in Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit living in us.

And a bit of a warning here or further clarification; listen carefully to what I am saying: “One can scarcely use these verses to claim that no one can simultaneously be a Christian and engage in homosexual actions unless one is prepared to say the same thing of one who commits adultery or exhibits greed! But in each of these instances true Christians should acknowledge their behavior as sinful and continuously try to change it. *Persistent rebellion increasingly calls into question any prior profession of faith.*” **Romans 1** also addresses these same issues, as well as lesbianism.” - Blomberg

We are not homophobic as we are accused. We try to love the way God does - always hoping for a change of heart followed by a change in behavior for the lost. If you are acting like those mentioned and engaged in this catalog of sins in our text, we are praying for you. We are hoping that with God’s help you will be less self-indulgent and self-serving and stop acting like the unregenerate world. We are praying also for ourselves that we might model to you love like our Savior.

Some churches are teaching what some used to call an alternate lifestyle, is indeed a Christian one. This is very regrettable on a number of fronts. It also gives people a false sense of security. It is my opinion that teachers of this nonsense will be held even more accountable than their disciples.

There is no real genetic influence toward any of the sins. Any sinful behavior can be overcome with God’s help, but we must want to be well. Any predisposition, if they could be demonstrated for individuals, would be an offshoot of the Fall, not of creation. People may need to guard more carefully what they engage in, but that scarcely turns sin into a divinely ordained lifestyle. - See Blomberg

“Anyone who is still afraid of people is not afraid of God. Anyone who fears God is no longer afraid of people.” - Bonhoeffer

**Romans 1:16-17 ESV**

**The Righteous Shall Live by Faith**

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith,[a] as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”[b]

Footnotes: [a] Romans 1:17 Or beginning and ending in faith

[b] Romans 1:17 Or The one who by faith is righteous shall live