How to Handle
Disputes between Brethren

1 Corinthians 6:1-8

4-30-2023

Introduction:

*** How should disputes be handled between fellow believers?**

I. Realize you <u>don't need the world</u> for answers (v. 1)

II. Realize that <u>believers</u> (indwelt by God's Spirit) are <u>more than qualified</u> to mediate problems (v. 2-5)

III. Realize you have a <u>testimony to uphold</u> in front of the public eye of unbelievers (v. 6)

IV. <u>Be willing to take a loss</u>, rather than demanding your rights and hurting Christ's testimony (v. 7-8)

Conclusion:

How to Handle
Disputes between Brethren

1 Corinthians 6:1-8

4-30-2023

Introduction:

*** How should disputes be handled between fellow believers?**

I. Realize you _____ for answers (v. 1)

II. Realize that _____ (indwelt by God's Spirit) are _____ _____ to mediate problems (v. 2-5)

III. Realize you have a _____ in front of the public eye of unbelievers (v. 6)

IV. _____, rather than demanding your rights and hurting Christ's testimony (v. 7-8)

Conclusion:

How to Handle
Disputes between Brethren

1 Corinthians 6:1-8

4-30-2023

Introduction:

ILLUS: of a family where all of the family members (brothers and sisters) took care of each other.

Contrary to that ideal, families today have become less close, less loving, and less patient.

Contemporary society reflects such self-centeredness quite graphically.

Most people seem to be out for themselves; with their own best interests in mind, living for # 1.

Our church is a family (Eph. 2:18-19), and like a family we need to care for one another.

Sometimes in "family" (where our true nature is often tested and manifested), we cause each other friction, conflict, disagreement, dispute, etc.

How we handle our problem is more vital than the problem itself.

In chapter 6 the carnal Corinthians again manifest their selfishness and pride by pursuing legal action against each other -- thus further ruining their testimony. They were already known for tolerating immorality (5:1-13).

The number of lawsuits in America is astounding.

Every six seconds a new lawsuit is begun in America (1995 statistic).

ILLUS: The woman who spilled her hot coffee on herself in McDonalds and sued them for not having a warning sign on the cup telling that it was hot . . . She won the case!

Greeks and the Law: Going to law to settle disputes was a way of life for the Greek. Contributing to this was the keen interest in philosophy, debate, dialect and argumentation. Public debate to sharpen one's view and settle disputes became a way of life, first in Athens and then spread to other parts of Greece. A good debate was considered as a form of entertainment and amusement.

*** How should disputes be handled between fellow believers?**

I. Realize you <u>don't need the world</u> for answers (v. 1)

Paul makes it a matter of audacity! How dare you?!

(This is a <u>serious</u> passage to God!)

"Any of you" - This admonition applies to every believer. No one is justified to go to the world for judgment on an inter-personal matter.

***"Matter"* =** case or dispute

Disagreements are unavoidable even among Christians.

The main problem is not the dispute, but how we handle the dispute.

In any relationship friction and differences of opinion will arise (Reason: We are all finite mortals, coming from various backgrounds, cultures, having different levels of understanding and Christian maturity).

"Unjust" - A synonym for an unbeliever or non-Christian. One who is <u>not</u> just (right) before the eyes of God. One who has never been justified by grace through faith.

"Saints" - holy ones, set-apart ones, people who have been sanctified by the Holy Spirit upon experiencing the new birth.

The people whom Paul is addressing, though *"carnal,"* are called *"saints."* (1:2). Note: ***"Saints...<u>you</u>"*** (6:2).

Should Christians ever go to the heathen (lost, unsaved, unregenerate) world for counsel (advice) on spiritual or interpersonal relationships?

Answer: NO!

Why not? They are not qualified to give true spiritual answers.

--They don't have a relationship with God.
--They don't possess the Holy Spirit
--They don't know God's Word
--Generally they don't care about you (don't have the love of Christ)

Yet, many Christians go to the heathen for:

- <u>marriage</u> counselling
- <u>crisis</u> counselling
- <u>family</u> counselling (child rearing)
- <u>psychological</u> counselling

(For physical or medical treatment, they can be beneficial; but for spiritual, emotional, relational therapy, no one is more qualified than a Christian who knows God's Word)

Nothing is more disgraceful than a Christian couple in a divorce court!

II. Realize that <u>believers</u> (indwelt by God's Spirit) are <u>more than qualified</u> to mediate problems (v. 2-5)

V. 2

"Do ye not know" - a common phrase in I Corinthians, showing the spiritual ignorance of this immature church (cp. 3:16; 5:6; 6:3, 9, 15, 16, 19; 9:13, 24).

"The saints shall judge the world *(kosmos)****" -*** When will God's people judge the world? Answer: During the 1,000 year Millennial reign of Christ.

SEE: Rev. 20:1-6

Jesus said:
"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." (Matthew 19:28)

"But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever. . . And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. . . And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him." (Daniel 7:18, 25, 27)

If you are qualified (via the Spirit who <u>now</u> dwells in you) to judge the world, aren't you qualified to examine (sift through the problems) and make proper decisions about the minute matters of this life?

According to Paul, you are <u>over-qualified</u> to judge.

The best judgment comes from God's people. They make the best judges and juries (the problem is that the world generally views our answers as unacceptable to them).

Paul recognized that the Romans were competent to counsel (Rom. 15:14 - *"And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another."*)

"Smallest matters" - The disputed matters were evidently so trivial and petty that they should have been embarrassed to fight such a case (we often get all bent out of shape over the silliest of issues).

V. 3

"We shall judge angels" - After the Rapture, when in glorified bodies, we shall (via our oneness in Christ) judge fallen angels who are reserved unto judgment (II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6).

Since Christ will do all the judging (Jn. 5:22), we because of our union with Him will take part in it.

Note: Since Christ lives in our hearts now, we are able to properly evaluate problems and render right verdicts.

If we will one day judge angels, judging things in "this life" ought to be a "piece of cake." (no sweat, no problem).

If the saints are qualified to judge the "highest class of created beings" (Morris, p. 94), are they not capable to judge in man's affairs?

V. 4

When it comes to judging earthly matters, believers are so qualified that Paul says that the Corinthians could even use the ones who are ***"least esteemed"*** (of lowly account) to sit in judgment and render a truthful, just, and accurate verdict or decision.

V. 5

"I speak to your shame" - It is a shame that the carnal Corinthian Christians took their interpersonal cases to the lost world, when they could have so easily dealt with the problem themselves. (A church must Biblically deal with its own problems; a synod, college or cardinals, or Pope is not needed.)

--It's a shame for a couple not to be able to handle their own problems and to go to some secular therapist for advice.

--It's a shame for believing parents not to know how to rear their own children, but to read the world's "How-to's" about child-rearing.

--It's a shame when a body of believers don't know how to work together to arrive at a solution which will honor Christ.

Is there ***"not a wise man?"*** - The Corinthians, who prided themselves on their pseudo "wisdom" (3:18, 4:10), could not even find one wise man who could judge in this matter.

"Among you" - Contextually, it is fitting that this admonition for the church to deal with its own problems comes on the heels of Paul's admonition for the church to do something about the immoral person who was in their midst (5:1-13). A church must deal with its own problems autonomously.

III. Realize you have a <u>testimony to uphold</u> in front of the public eye of unbelievers (v. 6)

"But <u>brother</u>. . . with <u>brother</u>" - Perhaps it doesn't happen often, but when it does it is really sad: to see a brother seeking to sue the pants off of his brother.

Shouldn't there be a family loyalty among brethren? A *"storge"* love? We are in the same family, experienced the same new birth, indwelt by the same spirit, have the same Father. . .

It is part of our Church Covenant not to take a fellow member to court.

Hodge cites the Rabbinical maxim: "It is a statute which binds all Israelites, that if one Israelite has a cause against another, it must not be prosecuted before the Gentiles." (cited by Morris, p. 93)

To take a brother to court is bad enough, but to do so before unbelievers is really a travesty. We don't need to "parade our differences" before the world. Be very careful about speaking evil of another brother before an unsaved person.

IV. <u>Be willing to take a loss</u>, rather than demanding your rights and hurting Christ's testimony (v. 7-8)

V. 7

"Utterly a fault" - A complete failure; i.e. before your case is even determined, Paul says, you are already complete <u>defeated</u>.

You are failure because you failed God in your pursuit of self-interest.

When Christians drag their disgruntled spirits before public eye and can't settle out of court, both parties lose! The only winner is the <u>devil</u>!

Believers are not to render evil for evil or seek revenge (Rom. 12:17, 19).

Sometimes we must turn the *"other cheek"* (Mt. 5:39) and *"give up our cloak"* (Mt. 5:40).

"Rights" -
"One element of the great American philosophy of life is that we all have certain inalienable rights. Among the most important privileges that our Declaration of Independence espouses are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (MacArthur, p. 327).

We live in a day and age when everyone is quick to defend their rights.

Today, we hear a lot about rights, but not a whole lot about responsibility.

It is a day when everyone wants their rights!

The gays want their rights, the feminists, union workers, the whites, Indians, blacks, Hispanics, etc. The prisoners, animals, etc.

The only ones who really deserve rights but don't have the ability to ask for it are the unborn.

In a world of wrong, not everyone can always have every right.

An over-concern for one's own rights stems from a preoccupation with self.

"Selfishness is at the core of people who live to get their own way." (Ja. 4:1-2 NKJV - *"Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.")*
When our # 1 goal in life is to get and keep what is "rightfully ours", then whoever or whatever gets in our way becomes the object of retaliation.

Much ungodly legislation has been signed into law by evil people under the guise of "civil rights" (EX: pornographic "art" which blasphemed Christ).

Paul willingly set aside his rights for the sake of the gospel and the welfare of others.

"Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? . . . Do we not have a right to eat and drink? Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working? . . . If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ" (I Cor. 9:1, 4-6, 12).

The only one who can suffer insult, injury and loss and never carry a grudge is the person who has died to self (Gal. 2:20 - *"I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life that I now life in the flesh, I live by the faith of the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.")*

"George Mueller wrote, 'There was a day when I died, utterly died to George Mueller and his opinions, his preferences, and his tastes and his will. I died to the world, to its approval and its censure. I died to the approval or the blame of even my brethren and friends. And since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God.'." (MacArthur, p. 336)

The one who surrenders his rights is like:

--Abraham, who gave the best to Lot
--Joseph, who blessed his brothers
--David, who honored King Saul
--Elisha, who fed his enemies (the Assyrian army)
--Daniel, who graciously entered the lion's den
--Stephen, who prayed for his executioners

"Rather take wrong" - Instead of making sure you squeeze every ounce of juice owed you, why not for testimony's sake forget it and be wronged; swallow the unjust pill; be cheated.

Something of more value is at stake than winning a case and arriving at a fair settlement.

"Be defrauded" - Be deprived.

Look at all the injustices Christ endured.

ILLUS: for the sake of peace and harmony, a child will allow his sibling to have the toy he snatched from the owner.

Rather than seeking restitution, sometimes we should just drop it!

We can justify our stingy-ness by saying, "It's mine! I worked for it! I earned it! I own it! And therefore, I am not obligated to share it!"

Who really owns it? Remember, we are only stewards.

ILLUS: A missionary in Papua New Guinea had a small garden next to his house. After trying many different vegetables without success, he finally discovered that pineapples would grow there. He had to wait 3 years for the plants to bear fruit, and he eagerly looked forward to tasting the delicious juicy pineapples. Unfortunately, he lived among natives that were the worst thieves in the world (including stealing the baby's diaper pins to use as earrings, the man's ball-point pen to put in place of the bone in their nose!). Before he could taste a single pineapple, they were all stolen. This happened again and again. He continually scolded, yelled at and rebuked the people. They in turn called him "Angry White Man." During furlough, he listened to a message about giving up all his rights to God, putting everything (even his pineapples) into God's hands. He returned to the field, telling God that the pineapple field was now His and he, the missionary, wouldn't even look at it anymore. The stealing continued as before, but the people noticed the difference in the missionary's attitude. Coming to him, they said, "Missionary, we see that you have become a Christian! You always used to preach to us about Christianity and we longed to really meet a Christian in person. Now you have become one!" Although humiliating to the missionary, this was the first step that led to the salvation of most of the tribe. (taken from "Pineapple Story" video)

Should a Christian ever sue a person? Most often No. It depends on what your motive is. 99.9% greed motive.

No, if it meant utter poverty to your opponent (today most people are covered by insurance, though).

Do you live for God's glory or your gold? . . . His righteousness or your rights? . . . for His service or your selfish desires?

(Before we do anything we should always ask, "Will God be glorified by this?" - I Cor. 10:31)

V. 8

Because you don't desire to be wronged, you do wrong. To get your way, you violate God's ways. To get your "pound of flesh," you dishonor God.

To see to it that you are not deprived (and go without something due you), you end up depriving God of the honor He should have had in the eyes of the pagans through your life and testimony.

"And that your brethren" - We owe unconditional love to our brethren; we owe forgiveness to our brethren. When you see God's love and forgiveness for you, you will see your need to do likewise to others.

It's better to take a loss than to sin against God.

EX: the selfish church which had a sign on its property that read "JESUS FIRST." Strong winds view the "JES" off, leaving the true spirit of the church remaining: "US FIRST"

Conclusion:

Well, we have seen how we should not treat one another in God's family. But how should we treat each other?

VIRTUES that promote unity:

--Humility (Phil. 2:2ff)

When our pride gets hurt, we are in danger of doing most anything to "win" for ego's sake.

--Peace (Ph. 4:3)

--Compassion & Love

I Pet. 3:8 - "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous"

--Unselfishness

Acts 4:32 - "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common."

--Courage (to confront and lovingly deal with interpersonal conflicts)

"A chain is only as strong as its weakest link" (We must all be faithful to each other and to the work of God)

--For any relationship to work, there must be uniting
(EX: work, sports, church, family).

--Satan fights unity! Don't let Him have a foothold in our church family.

Here is a list of the "one another's" in the New Testament:

1. Love one another (Jn. 13:34; 15:12)

2. In honor, preferring one another (Ro. 12:10)

3. Receive one another (Ro. 15:7)

4. Admonish one another (Ro. 15:14)

5. Greet ye one another (I Cor. 16:20)

6. Serve one another (Gal. 5:13)

7. (Patiently) forbearing one another (Eph. 4:2)

8. Forgiving one another (Eph. 4:32)

9. Comfort one another (I Th. 4:18)

10. Exhort one another (Heb. 3:13)

11. Consider one another (Heb. 10:24)