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LIFE NEWS



why not rather be wronged?

**BY JEREMIAH SHAWVER
YOUTH PASTOR**

The book of 1 Corinthians is written to a church with many difficulties and problems. This Church was riddled with factions, sexual immorality, disorder, and lawsuits. The Corinthians believed in Christ, and yet their lives had not reflected the change Christ had worked in them. For this reason, Paul writes to them, addressing each issue by applying the Gospel to the lives of the Corinthians.

In Chapter 6 of 1 Corinthians, Paul begins addressing the issue of lawsuits among the Church. From Paul, we understand that the people in the Church had decided the best way to deal with their brothers and sisters in Christ was to take them to court on any issue on which they may have grounds. These are most

likely small issues, not major crimes. Yet they had dealt with their grievances without considering the implication of the Gospel on their actions.

As it is, to have legal disputes against one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? "Instead, you yourselves do wrong and cheat—and you do this to brothers and sisters! Don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom? Do not be deceived: No sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, or males who have sex with males, no thieves, greedy people, drunkards, verbally abusive people, or swindlers will inherit God's kingdom. 11 And some of you used to be like this. But you were washed, you were sanctified,

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you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

The reputation of the Church was tarnished as the Corinthians brought each other to court. Paul's answer though is surprising. "Why not rather be wronged?" This is a shocking turn. He tells the Corinthians how to treat each other in light of the Gospel. That while they have the option to sue their fellow church member, they still have another option—the option of grace and forgiveness—to let go of the grievance and be reconciled with their brother.

Paul follows up this radical idea with a reminder for the Corinthians. He reminds them that those who persist in sin will not inherit the Kingdom of God. They must stop the foolishness of suing one another because in doing so, they have wronged and cheated each other. They are acting in line with the wisdom of this world and those who have no inheritance in God. This reminder is not to lay a burden on them or a guilt trip but to remind them who they were and who they are now. They used to be part of the kingdom of darkness, a kingdom of vengeance. Now they are clean, holy, and righteous because of who Jesus is. They can now consider their grievances and act as those who are clean, holy, and righteous.

It is who Christ has made them to be—forgiving, that the work Christ does in a believer leads to reconciled relationships. Not because all our conflicts disappear but because our Savior enters the picture. When we are confronted with all we have been forgiven of, we cannot help but forgive those around us. In fact, this becomes the standard by which our forgiveness is measured.

Often when I read these statements from Paul, my immediate reaction is to find a loophole. The only loophole available here would be the breaking of

laws. If a person is being harmed by another, we ought to report this. There are even laws ensuring this reporting occurs. In the case of abuse in any form, it is our duty to take care of those who are being abused and so we ought to do all we can to this end. This is not what is in view in 1st Corinthians 6. We know this because 1st Corinthians 5 deals with a case of sexual misconduct in the Church. This situation is dealt with by putting the offender outside of the fellowship.

When I read these words, I am reminded of Jesus, His teaching, and suffering. He taught us to "turn the other cheek" (Matthew 5:38-40) and prayed "Forgive them for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34) This is the grace I am being called to show to my brothers and sisters in Christ. In a world that is increasingly litigious, Paul asks again, "Why not rather be wronged?" When we heed the words of Christ and of Paul, we give an opportunity for the love and grace of Christ to be on full display. A chance for the world to see the light of Christ and to turn to Him.

In the Church, we will have conflict until Christ returns. We have the opportunity to turn each of these conflicts into gospel moments or defeats. We can offer the grace we have been given or further the grievance. When we are reconciled with each other, we make much of the Gospel. We show the world that the community of the saints is a community the world cannot offer. Maybe you have been in conflict with a brother or sister in Christ. The call of Christ is clear; it is time to forgive them and allow your relationship to be reconciled.

*by Rev. Jeremiah Shawver
Youth Pastor*