

Sermon to the Saints of God assembled at Topeka, KS: Sunday, December 8, 2019

### **Saints Shall Judge the World**

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, he addresses a series of issues wherein the church is walking disorderly, and in need of correction. (Divisions among the members, vain glory surrounding the gifts of God that each possessed, gross immorality, lack of church discipline, respecting of persons, contentions, women cutting their hair, etc.) The culmination of this wonderfully instructive letter is a focused and practical dissertation on charity (chapter 13). Unless our actions arise from, and are guided by love – true, spiritual love of our brethren, neighbors, and enemies, arising from our love of God – then nothing else that we do matters. We can do the “right” things every day, but if we do them in the malice, envy, and pride of our flesh, rather than with love, then they are not done unto God, and they are worthless. Our dear brother Jon has labored for many months to teach us from that blessed chapter – see his sermons for more on that topic. For my own studies, I have spent a good deal of time over the years focusing on several chapters of 1Corinthians (5, 11, 12, 13, etc), but I personally haven't focused a lot on chapter 6 vv1-8, because on it's face, that passage is addressing a problem that I've never seen within this church, namely: church members suing each other in court. However, when I read it again recently, it struck me that it has a much broader application, and so I'd like to take a closer look at that passage today.

To begin, let's read through the preceding chapter (5), so that we can get some context:

**1Corinthians 5** “1 It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. 2 And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. 3 For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. 6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? 7 ¶ Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. 9 ¶ I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: 10 Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. 11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or

*covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. 12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? 13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."*

Clearly then, the direct context as he begins chapter 6 is:

1. The church must maintain holiness; there must be a bright, shining line of demarcation between the just and the unjust; between the Church (whose head and hope is Jesus Christ), and the world (whose father and king is Satan the usurper).
2. A heavy insistence that when we are dealing with matters of obstinate, notorious sin, our fleshly reasoning must be set aside, and simple obedience must be followed in the exercise of church discipline. The Lord has furnished us with ample, and excellent remedies that we must lay our hands upon in the spirit of faith and love.

As we now proceed into chapter 6, you will see that Paul doubles down on the first point (maintaining holiness), but shifts to the other end of the scale on the second point. In chapter 5 we are dealing with obstinate, impenitent, notorious sin; in chapter 6 we are dealing with daily matters that arise between members of the church.

**1Corinthians 6:1-8** *"Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? 2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? 3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? 4 If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. 5 I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? 6 But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. 7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? 8 Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren."*

**1Corinthians 6:1** *Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?*

- Paul first lays down the charge against them, namely, that the members of the church were taking their trifling complaints against one another before heathen authorities, courts, and judges, rather than resolving their matters within the church.

- Firstly, we should not be litigious in ANY situation, unless we have no other option. (**Matthew 5:25**)
- If we must utilize the courts and other authorities of this world (which is certainly lawful for a Christian to do), then we should do so with sober thanksgiving to God for providing us that help (**Romans 13:3**), and without vengeful or punitive intent. However, we should not utilize heathen authorities to resolve a matter between the members of the church.
  - Gill: *“The apostle here dissuades from this practice, of going to law before Heathen magistrates, not only from its being an imprudent, but an impudent, “daring,” rash and adventurous action; and seems surprised that any should attempt it, when it must unavoidably expose their weaknesses and faults to their enemies; nor could they expect justice to be done them by men of such a character, as “unjust,” who neither feared God, nor regarded men; were not only destitute of righteousness, but filled with all unrighteousness; when on the contrary, from the saints, men who have the principles of grace and holiness wrought in them, and live soberly, righteously, and godly, who have the fear of God before their eyes, and upon their hearts; they might reasonably conclude, were matters brought before them, they would judge according to judgment and truth, without exposing the sin and weakness of any party to the world.”*
  - Calvin: *“If anyone has a controversy with a brother, it ought to be decided before godly judges, and that it ought not to be before those that are ungodly. [Hereby] disgrace is brought upon the gospel, and the name of Christ is held up to the scoffings of the ungodly. For the ungodly, at the instigation of Satan, are always eagerly on the watch for opportunities of finding occasion of calumny against the doctrine of godliness. Now believers, when they make them parties in their disputes, seem as though they did on set purpose furnish them with a handle for reviling. A second reason may be added — that we treat our brethren disdainfully, when we of our own accord subject them to the decisions of unbelievers.”*
- Notice how cleanly this verse addresses the fact that there are two and only two groups of people in the world: the unjust and the saints. Righteous and unrighteous; sheep and goats; redeemed and reprobate; loved of God and hated of God. There is no grey area; they do not overlap; they are wholly separate and distinct. Implicit in this dichotomy is that the only way a man is righteous, is if he

has been chosen by the Father, redeemed by Christ the Righteous, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit; without that merciful salvation, he is an unregenerate child of the devil. The world works feverishly to make us ashamed to believe such a thing. Satan (and his antichrist sycophants) want us to look around at all of the “wonderful”, “kind”, “compassionate”, “helpful”, “creative”, “diverse”, “charitable”, “intelligent” people of the world, and to measure ourselves against them. If we make such a fleshly measurement, then surely, we will see that we have much in common with people outside of the body of Christ, and in fact, they are better than us in most every regard. Through a lens of flesh, they would be right! But that is not our lens, beloved! We must consider this matter as God does; we cannot be respecters of persons that measure the relative goodness and worldly wisdom of depraved men; we must only measure whether a person shows fruits meet for repentance - the fruit of the Spirit, whereby we have evidence that they belong to Christ and they wear the garments of HIS righteousness. God forbid that we would ever be ashamed to be called by the name of Christ, and therefore sharply distinct from the world. Consider Paul’s words from earlier in this same letter:

- *1Corinthians 1:18-31 “18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. 20 Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. 22 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: 23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; 24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: 27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; 28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: 29 That no flesh should glory in his presence. 30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: 31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”*

- This verse seems to be explicitly talking about going before heathen judges with complaints about our co-elect. However, I think that there are other ways that we can “go to law before the unjust”.
  - There are many ways that we can hold our brethren up to contempt in the court of public opinion. For instance, we can speak evil of them to coworkers or school mates; or we can pass up appropriate opportunities to speak well of them, particularly when they are evil spoken of. We have no business doing that.
  - Further, we can hold court in our heart of flesh against our brethren. We can invite Satan – the accuser of the brethren - to come into our heart and preside over matters wherein we accuse our brethren with the law of flesh that writhes within us. We can disregard our Father’s plain command to love our brethren with an unfeigned love, wherein we ought to actively go to war against ANY HINT of our malicious, envious, proud flesh, and seek God to renew and enliven the love that He has placed in our hearts. We can easily quit the field from that continual bloody war within us, and retreat to the wisdom and devices of our flesh to judge our brethren censoriously in our hearts. All the while, we can refuse to seek and HEED the counsel of our brethren, who are WELL ABLE to help us to view one another through a scriptural and charitable lens – they being experts in the Royal Law (**James 2:8**). We are all prone to this great evil. How dare we! When we find ourselves in this spot; when we know we are hating on our brothers and sisters in our heart; when our brethren have reminded us plainly what scriptural remedies we ought to employ, and yet we still sit, feeding upon the ashes of wrath and justifying our cause in our own foolish minds, we are gravely endangering ourselves and the church. How dare we!

***Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?***

- What is the nature of this judging that the saints will engage in? This is an expansive topic, and one that I don’t claim to have full light on. I believe that the scriptures speak to a role that the saints will have in the millennial reign of Christ, in the Judgment Day, and in eternity. For the sake of this discussion, let’s simply focus on the role of the saints during the 1000 year reign of Christ on the earth. Consider the scriptures:
  - **Revelation 1:5,6** “5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, 6 **And hath made**

**us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.**

- ***Revelation 2:26-27*** “26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, **to him will I give power over the nations: 27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.**”
- ***Revelation 20:1-6*** “1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, 3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. 4 **And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them:** and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; **and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.** 5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, **but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.**”
- So we see that the saints of God will be made kings and priests with Christ in His millennial kingdom - judging, ruling, and reigning. I take that to mean that the saints - in the presence of Christ, and under His authority - will administer the government of His Kingdom; ruling over the subdued heathen nations, and the imprisoned angels. I’m not going to delve further into these details today; if you would like a more detailed analysis, please look at the sermon that Tim preached on November 20, 2016. We will have a part in ruling over the inhabitants of the whole world? Many days I struggle to appropriately govern my own family, and execute my day job, so how will I be able to do something so lofty as this? We will have a part in regulating the affairs of angels, and administering judgment to those that are condemned? We know very little about that race of creatures - they are a magnificent and superior creation - so how will we be able to judge them? While this concept is overwhelming to the human mind, the answer is simple: our Lord will provide us with the knowledge, wisdom, and capacity to do that work. That is no more difficult for Him to do than it is for Him to grant us the authority to do the work in the first place; it won’t be about us, it will be about Him, and it will glorify Him.
- Considering what lies ahead of us should make us afraid to be at odds with one another in this flesh. These are the souls that have been bonded together in the

family of Christ – crafted into a living body; these are those pilgrims that look to an enduring city wherein they will reign with Him; these are those that will be Kings and Priests with their Lord! Are we not then able to help one another to make and keep peace? If you find yourself at odds with one of your brothers or sisters, then you should run to each other – make peace in the spirit, above all else – freely acknowledge your faults and reaffirm your love for one another, and then go forward in mutual love for the King, forgetting those things which are behind. If you are stuck and need help from a person with experience, then discreetly get that help, and HEED THAT HELP! We must each submit ourselves in this manner. Seek peace and pursue it like a dedicated hunter stalking his prey (*Psalms 34:14*) – that ought to be an obsession for each of us.

- Our capacity to help one another is born of the Holy Spirit dwelling within us – it does not come from our own wisdom! That spiritual understanding grows within us as the Lord sees fit to teach us – our senses being exercised by reason of use. The help that we can offer one another is not born of analytical and forensic prowess; it is not enforced by authority and might. The very best that we have to offer is provocation to sow to the Spirit, and deal with one another in the love of God. Therein lies the problem with going to a heathen person for help when you are at odds with a brother: the Spirit does not dwell in the unregenerate and so they cannot, by definition, provoke you to Spirit, nor can they judge by His wisdom. They are profane, like their brother Esau. You might say that you have gone to a brother for help in the past and had a bad experience. To that, I say: 1) That doesn't change the plain standard of God – this is the remedy that He provided, and we must make use of it. 2) You must ask yourself honestly – “what did I contribute to that situation that made it go poorly”. 3) The body grows together, a holy temple unto God; growing is sometimes painful but it is necessary. Relish the opportunity to learn – and to help your friends learn – so that we can do better next time. *“Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.” (Proverbs 27:6)*

***If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers.***

- For most of my life, I have read verse 4 to mean that we should set matters before the least esteemed (least experienced) members in the church, because we would do much better with a person that has the Spirit of God dwelling in them, even though they have practical inexperience, rather than going to a heathen man that

is well experienced, but resides always and only in the flesh. I absolutely believe that to be a true concept; however, I don't think that's the meaning of the verse.

- This interpretation presents an inconsistency to my mind: verse 4 says to set the matter before those that are “least esteemed”, while verse 5 calls for searching out a “wise man” to set the matters before.
- Rather, I read “least esteemed in the church” to mean heathen authorities and judges; they are least esteemed by the church, because the Spirit of Grace does not dwell in them. Rather than giving an instruction in this verse, I believe that Paul is forcefully restating the charge from verse 1. I read it like this: “If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, [and then ye] set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church, I speak to your shame.” With that interpretation in mind, I would paraphrase the passage like this: Seeing that the saints will judge the world and angels, and yet when you have judgments of the small things pertaining to this life, you set heathen judges to govern among you – shame on you! Is there not one wise man among you to bring spiritual help to bear?
  - Both of these interpretations are instructive, but this interpretation seems more consistent to me, and it also puts a focus on being deliberate and considered when deciding where to look for help: a “wise man” that is “able to judge between his brethren”. If we need to get help with a matter, then we ought to look for a person who has demonstrated spiritual wisdom and who has been exercised by experience, particularly in the context of the matter that we are struggling with. We ought to be looking for a person that has demonstrated appropriate discretion – not prone to foolishly spreading matters around and stirring strife. We ought to look for a person that will not be driven and persuaded by the forceful wind of our emotion; even if we have found such a person, we ought to ask the Lord to help us temper our presentation of the matter before discussing it, knowing the overwhelming, hypocritical pride that swells in each of us. We ought to look for a person that is willing to tell us spiritual truths, even if it is not the answer that we want to hear; “yes men” are of no help to our souls; caucusing with inexperienced people on the strength of fleshly argumentation does nothing but engender malice, and give opportunity for Satan to gain a foothold in the body. Of course seeking appropriate help is good, but it doesn't mean much if we won't submit to the counsel that we receive.

***Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.***

- Beloved, first and foremost, we ought to forebear one another; we ought to be willing to put away our pride, and suffer injury – whether real or perceived – without turning to quarrelling with our co-elect. Overlook. Forebear. Forgive. Forget. Each of our brothers and sisters are under the same stresses that we are, and subject to the same flesh that we are. Each of us are pilgrims hoping to be brought into our long home together, where we will reign together as kings and priests with our Lord. How then can we be so willing to turn aside to judging and despising one another? What injury has any one of us suffered that can interfere with the love that we have for Christ and therefore ought to have for one another? What offence can REMOTELY compare with the joy that awaits us? What trifling matter is worth chewing and churning on? Any time that we get ourselves all lathered up, furiously building and rehearsing a case in our minds about the ways that our co-elect have wronged us, we should STOP and consider whether we would say all of that crap to the Lord Jesus Christ if he walked in the door at that moment. My friends – if this entire life is a vapor, then what are the grinding machinations of our heart? I’m not going to further belabor this point, because 1) as much as we make it complicated in our minds, it is not at all complicated, and 2) we have had several sermons devoted to this topic over the past few years. I’ll simply leave you with this passage from Ephesians that gives us the wonderful and sufficient recipe for peace with our co-elect:
  - ***Ephesians 4:1-3*** “1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, 2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

I love you all. Amen.