

Christian Disputes

Introduction:

- A. [**Braking up disputes**]
- B. How should Christians handle disputes with each other?
- C. 1 Corinthians 6:1-8
- D. *“When we have a dispute with another Christian, we need to handle it within the church.”*
- E. From our passage we have one clear practical truth: It is a sin for Christians to sue other Christians.
- F. However instead of focusing of just legal ramifications, let’s look at the reason why church disputes should stay “in house”...
- G. 3 Reasons Christian disputes shouldn’t be taken outside of the church:
 - I. Disputes taken out of the church present a poor testimony to the lost.
 - a. The Corinthians were damaging their witness to the community around them. (1&6)
 - i. Partly this was to blame for their culture.
 - 1. The Greeks loved to sue & stir up lawsuits...
 - 2. Unlike the Jews – Rome allowed them to take care of their property disputes in the synagogues.
 - ii. But know these saved Corinthians were taking all their petty disagreements with each other to court instead the church.
 - iii. Thus Paul was rebuking their actions before nonbelievers.
 - 1. Besides the fact that they were seeking the judgment of fallen man over God’s plan...
 - 2. They were damaging the credibility of their witness to these non-Christians...
 - 3. They were causing these unbelievers to focus on church problems rather than the purpose of the church.
 - b. We too must be careful not to damage our witness to the world over petty disputes.
 - i. Our American culture is just as bad
 - 1. [**Court TV**]
 - 2. Just look at the attorney adds in the Yellow Pages...
 - ii. However, we need to realize that Christians fighting other Christians sends the wrong message to the world.
 - 1. Why would they want to be a Christian if they think we have just as many problems as they do...
 - 2. And we are just as incapable to solving those problems...
 - 3. Why should they trust in God that we don’t trust in for wisdom, power, or purpose?
 - 4. Why should they want to hear our message of the gospel...?
 - 5. Or what appeal does the church really have for them...
 - iii. We are truly given a mandate to show our faith in Christ through our love of other Christians.
 - 1. *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”* – Jn. 13:34-35
 - 2. To sue sends to opposite message then love!
 - 3. We must be on guard.
 - 4. *“People who do not believe are living all around you and might say that you are doing wrong. Live such good lives that they will see the good things you do and will give glory to God on the day when Christ comes again.”* – 1 Pet. 2:12 (NCV)

“We must guard our testimony, next reason...”

II. Disputes taken out of the church show that the church is dysfunctional. (2-5)

- a. The Corinthians were proving that they had an unhealthy church.
 - i. They did not realize the problem solving potential that they possessed as a church.
 1. If they were going to judge the world and angels...
 2. Then they surly could judge small matters with their brethren in the church.
 3. Where does Paul get this about future judgments?
 4. *“And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”* – Rev. 20:4
 5. **[The Millennial Reign of Christ]**
 6. There are angels who will be judged...
 7. *“For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment”* – 2 Pete 2:4
 8. But this could just mean that we will reign with Christ over all creation, including the angels...
 - ii. Paul wanted the Corinthians to see how inconceivable the use of the secular court system really was. (4)
 1. This verse is hard to interpret...

2. This could be an ironic question of the saints that they would really turn their cases over to unqualified pagan judges
 3. OR its pointing out that the least legal educated person in the church is more qualified than these pagan judges...
 - a. How?
 - b. They have the H.S. & the Word!
 4. Either way Paul is exhorting them to turn to the church, which is more qualified to handle such disputes.
 - iii. But because the Corinthians failed to do this, it was to their shame. (5)
- b. We too must realize the churches potential to handle our disputes with fellow brethren.
 - i. Think about how much time and money can be saved if we would follow the Bible!
 - ii. After all Jesus gave us the church to be a refuge, a hospital, and a place for wisdom
 1. *“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.”* – Matt. 18:15-17
 2. **[Oh How America Has Forgotten The Church]**
 - iii. Just think about the untapped power each church has through the 2 gifts of the Holy Spirit and the Bible!

“We must be a healthy church, final reason...”

- III. Disputes taken out of the church display a defeated attitude.
- a. The Corinthians quest to sue their fellow believers showed that they were living in wickedness. (7-8)
 - i. Paul was saying that their case was already defeated, before it began.
 1. Win or lose...
 2. They were in the wrong for taking their brethren to court
 - ii. They should have expressed a righteous attitude. (7b)
 1. An attitude that says “I’d rather be wronged and cheated, then to sue my fellow Christian.”
 2. An attitude that understands that it is far better to lose financially than to lose spiritually.
 - iii. But Paul calls them out for their corrupt motives (8)
 1. They were doing this out of selfishness...
 2. They were probably exacting vengeance...
 3. Therefore they were just as guilty as those they were suing!
 - b. We too need to realize that taking actions against other Christians, such as lawsuits, shows an attitude of defeat in our lives.
 - i. We must remember that Jesus called for us to live to a different standard than the rest of the world.
 1. We must think and act differently...
 2. We must keep our first reactions in check...
 3. Listen to Jesus...

4. *“But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.”* – Matt. 5:39-42
5. This is to be our attitude to those of the world...
6. Thank about how much more sacrificial we should be towards our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ!
- ii. We must have an attitude of victory and not defeat!
 1. **[Not dog eat dog; I’m going to get mine...]**
 2. “I would rather suffer loss, then to take from another Christian!”
- iii. Remember we should not be driven by selfishness, greed, or vengeance!
 1. **Matt. 18:21-35**
 2. Remember how much we have been forgiven!
 3. What right do we have to be so unjust to our brethren?

“Thus we are to keep Christian disputes within the church.”

Conclusion

- A. How do you stand in regards to your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ?
- B. Have you found the One who acquits and forgives you of the bondage of sin?