

**Introduction:**

- A. Paragraph 4  
We commit to submit...to the settlement of disputes by and/or among the members of the church without appeal to any outside civil court, according to Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 6:1-8,
  - B. A legitimate conviction of individual rights can turn into an inordinate obsession
  - C. I Cor 6:1-11—A Divinely Inspired Declaration on how to deal with disputes among God’s people
- I. The Context: Recognize the Boundaries of Jurisdiction
- A. Two Christians went to civil court over some kind of land or financial dispute
  - B. The Church deals with its own matters *in house* (1 Cor 5:12-13)
    - 1. The Church has everything it needs to deal with interpersonal matters between believers through the word of God and the Gospel (Eph 3:10)
  - C. What does 1 Cor 6 teach in a nutshell?
    - 1. Paul forbids Christians to sue persons who are members in good standing of a Christian church that is faithful to scripture
- II. Why is it shameful for believers to sue each other in secular court?
- A. Eschatological Reason (6:4-6)  
*The Reality and Gravity of the eschatological state of affairs breaks into the now-time and informs, shapes, and governs our response to disputes with one another*
    - 1. We will judge the world (Dan 7:21-22<sup>1</sup>)
    - 2. We will judge angels (2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6; 1 Enoch 67-69).<sup>2</sup>
    - 3. Don’t lay your cases before those who have no standing in the church (6:4)
  - B. Shame upon Christ and His Bride (6:4-7)
  - C. Civil Courts treat Symptoms while the Church treats heart matters (6:4, 8)
    - 1. The adversarial process still encourages the depersonalization and destruction of an opponent
    - 2. From where do disputes arise? (Jas 4:1-3; Cf. 1 Cor 6:5)
    - 3. Paul’s Jewish background gave the impetus for such an approach (Exod 18:13-27)
    - 4. Willing to be wronged (6:7)
- III. The Grave Consequence of Greed and Its Remedy (6:9-11)
- A. The Grave Error and the Consequence of Greed (6:9-10)

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<sup>1</sup>Dan 7:21-22: <sup>21</sup> As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them, <sup>22</sup> until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom.”

<sup>2</sup>“For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; (2 Pet. 2:4); “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-- (Jude 1:6).

1. The colony of the church on earth should mirror the colony of the church in heaven as much as possible
  2. Idolaters, thieves, the greedy and swindlers are also included in this list
- B. The Gospel Consolation (v. 11): Such *were* some of you but...
- IV. The Ideal Scenario
- A. The ideal scenario, according to 1 Cor 6:1–8 and Matt 18:15–20 is that disputes between believers would be settled within the context of the church
- V. When is it Permissible to Go to Court?
- A. If a Christian is excommunicated from a church, he is no longer treated as a believer and the Christian with whom he has a dispute would then be free to go to court if necessary
- B. What if one party's church doesn't carry out its biblical responsibility to judge the case?
1. Two alternatives:
    - a. You could drop the matter and suffer loss (1 Cor 6:7)
    - b. You could ask the leaders of your church to meet with the leaders of your opponent's church in an effort to persuade them to fulfill their biblical responsibility to help you resolve your dispute
  2. If the church refuses to cooperate practice biblical peacemaking/discipline
  3. Follow the counsel and advice of your church and do not act unilaterally
  4. In any scenario when you are considering pursuing litigation, you should be able to answer yes to two questions:
    - a. Are you exercising biblically legitimate rights?
    - b. Does your action have a righteous purpose?
- VI. Some Preemptive practical considerations
- A. Know what you are getting yourself into
- B. CONTRACTS—Make Expectations and Responsibilities Clear on Both Sides
- C. Take Church Membership/Discipline into Consideration when entering into a business agreement with a fellow believer
- VII. The Gospel as the Remedy to Quarrels (1 Pet. 2:20-23)