

1 Corinthians 6:1-8

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Date: 24 January 2016

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[0 : 00] All right, we got ready.

I wore my New England dress boots this morning. If you haven't lived up here before, welcome to snow. It's a beautiful, beautiful thing. So I wonder what you would do this morning if you walked out and you saw one of your brothers and sisters backing out of their parking space, completely crush your back bumper, shattering the taillight, and drive off, leaving your bumper hanging, your side panel dented, and your car technically undrivable because of a broken taillight.

How would you respond? This isn't normally what we would think about when we come to church this morning, but in the providence of God and in the writing of his scripture, this is what he leaves us with.

Should we as Christians just forgive and forget? I, as a brother in Christ, I'm sure he didn't mean it. It's too bad. Just overlook it.

Should we follow every bus in New Haven and go get Carter and get our rights and get him to pay us back? Do we call the police?

[1 : 34] File police report. Somebody hit my car. What if it's only scratch or a ding? Does that make a difference? What if it's undrivable?

You know, we live in a culture where things like this happen every day. And in our culture, we respond almost always by wanting to protect our rights.

We want to go get what is ours. Protect what is ours. Sue if you can. Sue if you need to. To make sure that no one takes advantage of you.

My seminary professor, D.A. Carson, wrote this. We've entered an era of multiplying litigation in which punitive compensatory damages are ardently sought.

Less out of a passion for dispassionate justice than out of our passionate greed. Out of vengeful pettiness that feeds on newly discovered forms of, quote unquote, victimization.

[2 : 42] That's a dense mouthful, isn't it? Let's unpack it. What he's saying is what drives our culture? We love to sue. Why?

We don't just want to get the money back that we're owed. We want to punish the person who's made it inconvenient for us to do that. So we seek punitive compensatory damages.

We want not just our money, but we want to punish the person who did it. And what drives us? Not a pure desire for justice in the world, but a passionate pursuit of greed.

Passionate greediness covers us. And vengeful pettiness. You did this to me, I'm going to do that to you. I'm going to get you back for what you did to me.

And a culture of victimization, which says, I'm the victim here, therefore, I am going to pursue every avenue to make sure that I get paid back for what I have suffered.

[3 : 48] It's so easy to feel this way. So easy to think, but it's my rights. It's my legal rights. It's my human rights. It's my created in God's image rights.

I want to be the judge. I want to hold everyone accountable. I want to make sure that I don't lose in the process. Is this really how the gospel shapes us to respond to situations like this?

Is the church to respond differently in these situations? What kind of a difference does it make that we know Jesus?

Now, as we explore this, let me give you a couple of disclaimers. One is that there's no way that we can cover all of the contingencies that might come up.

Life is way messier than case studies. And you may be sitting there this morning thinking, there is no other way. That seems really right. And when you start to hear me read the passage and you think, you want me to do that?

[4 : 58] You're going to have all of these yes buts ringing in your ears and rising up in your heart. Well, hang in there because hopefully we'll address some of those.

This is where we're going to go. First, we're going to look at our passage. It's 1 Corinthians 6. I forgot to look up the page number again. It's in your bulletin. It's in, I don't know, 1,000 and something.

9.54. Thank you. 9.54. 1 Corinthians 6. We're looking at the next passage. This is a series. Nick said it last week. Let me say it again. We wouldn't have picked this as a topical sermon, would we have?

It's just the next passage as we go through this letter. And yet, we have so much to learn and God has so much to speak to us. And so, what a blessing it is for us.

We're going to look at the passage first and just try to understand it in its own context. What does it say? And why does it say it? Secondly, we're going to express what I'm guessing are some of those yes buts that rise up in your heart.

[5 : 58] Some of the questions about these kinds of situations. Third, I'm going to look at two case studies to try to apply it in depth for you to think about it.

What would this actually look like in practice? And fourth, we're going to look for the grounds. How is it? How is it that the gospel might actually help us do this?

How might the gospel shape our thinking so that we could actually do what this passage tells us to? So, first, let's read together 1 Corinthians chapter 6 verses 1 through 8.

When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints?

Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases?

[7 : 01] Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life? So, if you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church?

I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers? But brother goes to law against brother.

And that before unbelievers? To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong?

Why not rather be defrauded? But you yourselves wrong and defraud even your own brothers?

Let's pray. Lord, we come to this passage this morning and we confess that it is hard. This is not how we typically think.

[8 : 09] And it's not how we typically act. God, I pray this morning that you would help us to understand your word. That your spirit would lead us to clarity.

Clarity of what the truth is. And also, Lord, a clarity about who you are and why who you are makes a difference. How we live our everyday life.

God, I pray for your help for me as I speak. That my words would be yours. That you would use them in all of our hearts for your glory. And for our good.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Just to remind you, last week, Pastor Nick preached on chapter 5.

And it talked about how within the church family, within the church body, pursuing the good of the whole, the good of each of us, in our happiness and our spiritual well-being is pursuing holiness.

[9 : 16] And that to pursue that holiness is in love to confront sin when it arises. And to even break judgment within the church against those who, in repeated, unrepentant sin, contradict their confession of being a follower of Christ.

And so it ends, chapter 5 ends with, are we not to judge those within the church? We are. Are we to judge those outside?

No, that's God's job. But within the church, we are to pursue this holiness together. Paul picks up this thread and he deals with a slightly different situation.

But the theme is still judgment. And the context is still within the church family. Within those who have committed themselves to Christ. And interestingly, if you've noticed, even as I read this, this passage is not an argument.

This passage is a rant. It is a diatribe. He just cannot believe what the Corinthian church is doing. And his explanation, he sort of says, you're doing this?

[10 : 35] How could that be? And then he gives a couple of reasons why his outrage is so deep. And so let's look at first what he's saying and then why he says it.

What are the grounds in it? First, you see it in verse 1. He says, you're going to the law before the unrighteous instead of the saints. He's saying, when you have a dispute, you are taking them to the civil courts.

Now, the civil courts in Corinth were a very public matter. It was actually a place of entertainment for the Corinthian community. Many people would gather for these spectacles.

Think of, you know, the people's court on steroids. This is what the civil courts looked like. And Paul is saying, why are you taking a dispute with a brother in Christ or a sister in Christ in front of the public?

Why are you doing that? Now, one of the things we need to define very early on, and this will become very important as we address some of the yes buts, right?

[11 : 47] Is what is the case? Look at how he describes what the problem is. Verse 1 says it's a grievance. Verse 2 says it's a trivial case.

Verse 3 says it's matters pertaining just to this life. Verse 5 calls it a dispute. What is it that is being addressed here?

It is important to see that this is not breaking a law. This is not assault. This is not violence.

This is not high-handed, large malfeasance and corruption. These are smaller cases. These were what, in our legal system, would typically be called civil cases, where we're seeking damages or money to be paid back or resolving money that is owed.

It tends to be oriented towards property. If you've ever seen Judge Judy, this is what she does. She offers legal arbitration for small claims court.

[12 : 58] And these are the issues that I think that Paul has in mind here. We'll come back to that. But let me just say that that's an important framework. These are the kinds of cases.

And he's saying, why are you dragging this into the public forum for entertainment, for the shame of the church, as he says in verse 5, for the dishonoring of the name of Christ?

He says, because there's another way to do this. There's another way to resolve this, right? Look at the end of verse 1. Dare he go? Does he dare go to the law before the unrighteous?

Instead of the saints. And so his first reason, we see in verses 2 through 6, is because the saints, because of God's regenerate work in them, because of their knowledge, however imperfect, of the justice and righteousness of God and the nature of his kingdom, have a role eternally in God's creation to judge the world.

This is probably built off of a, there's a tradition built from Daniel 7, 22. You don't have to go there. But where it seems that the saints will judge the world, will sit in judgment.

[14 : 24] You see in Matthew 19, 28, Jesus seems to indicate similarly that the church will sit in judgment of the world with Jesus. With Jesus.

As Jesus is the ultimate one, who has the ultimate right, and who is the perfect judge, we will join with him in that future eschatological judgment, that judgment that is to come.

He says if the church is going to participate in the future, judging not only even the world, but even the angels, the spiritual world, as well as the physical world, don't you think that the saints can resolve a little petty disagreement over stuff that's not going to last forever?

He argues from the greater to the lesser. If the saints are going to do these great things, why do you not think they could do the lesser things?

And why would you abandon that judgment? Take that judgment out of the church, a community where understanding of God's principles of justice and righteousness, of moral purity, and also of mercy and of grace, and how these things ought to work together.

[15 : 57] Why would you take them outside to a community that's going to have much less, only a common grace understanding of those principles?

Those who don't know the God of the Bible struggle to understand how he can be both a God of justice and a God of grace.

Struggle to know how his patience with the fallen world and his absolute moral purity and righteousness live together. Friends, we know within the church this God.

Don't take it outside is what Paul is saying. So that's what we see in verses 2 through 6.

And then in verses 7 and 8, he takes it another step further. Not only are we to resolve these disputes within the church because the saints are to judge the world, but also in verses 7 through 8 because, and this is hard to say, let alone for it to land in your hearts, but let me just say it.

[17 : 11] Because it is better to be wronged than to win. Paul says if you have these lawsuits publicly happening out there, you have already lost.

You have already lost the honor of the Christian community. You have already lost because you have abandoned the places where you are most likely to find judgment that will be just and right.

But you have already lost because when you do that, you have taken your brother and sister, one for whom Christ died, and you have made him an adversary.

When you take it out into the civil court system, you are functionally and fundamentally making your brother or your sister an adversary.

And Paul says, why not suffer being wronged instead of destroying the unity of the church and bringing public dishonor to the name of Christ by pursuing your rights?

[18 : 23] Paul says you are being motivated by self-protection and self-gain, and you are jeopardizing something precious for the sake of money and your own personal sense of rights.

Now I know you're all saying, but, but, but, but, but, but, we'll get there. Please hang in there. Don't lose, don't let me lose you. But this is a striking command that Paul gives.

Why not rather be wronged? That's what he's saying to the party who has lost in this civil case. And then in verse eight, he turns it on the other person and he says, but you're already wronging one another.

You're already doing these things. He says, stop it. Even your own brothers, you are doing these things.

And in doing so, you are destroying the church. So this is what Paul's saying. Paul's saying when we have these petty disputes, if someone backs into my car in the parking lot, I ought to resolve this first and foremost with my brother and sister in Christ within the church, in a way that the church, in a way that honors one another as fellow heirs of Christ, in a way that reflects the justice and mercy and love that are to characterize the church community.

[20 : 07] Rather than seeking to assert our rights or wanting to just win or make sure that we don't lose, we are to address this remarkably different.

All right. Are we ready? Now we're there for the but, but, but. Here we go. Here are a couple of things that I'd like to be raising up in your heart as you hear this passage. First is, is the church really safe?

Is the church really going to do this well? And look, the track record is not great. We know, I mean, let's be honest, we are in this church today partly because of the scandal of the Catholic church and its inability to deal internally with justice and righteousness to protect its parishioners.

But lest you feel like I'm throwing stones at stained glass windows, if you went home and Googled the Southern Baptist Church and sexual assault, you would find that our own denomination has a pretty lousy track record in this case as well.

There is quite a public record of ways in which our, broadly, our denomination has not dealt well with this. Let me just acknowledge that up front.

[21 : 42] But what Paul is arguing here is that if chapter 5 is actually working, chapter 6 makes sense.

Okay? Is the church safe? I'm going to tell you, it's flawed. But, Nick stood up here last week and said to you, we are committed as a church to chapter 5 being what characterizes our church.

And we may not do it perfectly, but we are committed to doing it and growing in it and doing it better and better and better. because we love holiness and because we want your happiness and because we want the honor of Christ.

And so we're going to deal with our stuff internally as a church. And if that's true, then I want to ask you to at least have hope that chapter 6, 1 through 8, could be a real thing as well.

Because trusting the ability and the judgment of the church to address sin and wrongdoing is a part of the picture of what Paul is painting here as a gospel community.

[23 : 06] It is absolutely essential. If I polled you, my guess is that over 50% of you would say, if I had a dispute, would you rather go to a civil judge or to the church elders to have it resolved?

My guess is over 50% of you, your gut reaction would be, I wouldn't go to the church. I think that's just where we're at today.

But friends, 1 Corinthians 6 challenges us to rethink that. I know I haven't allayed all of your fears.

We'll keep going with some of those in just a minute. The second, the second what about? What about people who aren't in church? What do I do if it's, I don't know who it was, some guy driving a frontier car.

It didn't look like it was a member of our church. What do I do then? Well, you know what? Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2 outlay the fact that God has given us a civil government in order to address, in an attempt, in a common grace way, those civil governments are meant to rule over our lives and to rule over our societies to bring justice and to provide care for the citizens of it.

[24 : 23] Right? To promote health and safety and peace and to punish wrongdoing. That seems to be the role of a civil government. And you know what? If it's someone outside the church, then we can engage in the civil government's role that it would have.

So it's okay to do it there. Paul is not saying that we can't ever take someone to court for something like this. But he is saying that if we do it in the church, if it's someone in the church, we ought to have a different approach.

Now, you'll see this play out in a little bit. We still need to check our own hearts. Because as a believer, I should never be driven by, what did Dr. Carson call it, vindictive pettiness, passionate greed, punitive compensatory rights.

We should never be driven by those things. Even in our interactions with others outside the church. But if it is outside the church, the church can't, it has no authority to rule over this case.

And so it's okay to address it appropriately in society. The third thing, this is the one I'm guessing, is ringing in your ears.

[25 : 41] What about cases that don't seem so trivial? All right? We're going to go right for the jugular because sexual abuse is one of the places where the church has failed so drastically and so dramatically.

Okay? Let me help you understand how this passage relates to that. First of all, as I clarified earlier, this passage is about civil cases.

It is not actually about criminal cases. That's a distinction in our legal system. There might be some gray areas. For those of you who are lawyers, you might be saying, well, what about this?

What about that? We could talk through that. We could try to think through the contingencies of it. But broadly, if a crime is committed, that's not what Paul is addressing here.

And in fact, if a crime is committed, we as a church are thankful that we have a government to oversee us and to rule us in those ways. And so, in a criminal case, breaking the law is still wrong.

[26 : 52] And there are appropriate consequences. Let's talk about sexual abuse as a breaking of the law and its place in the life of the church.

And we have to deal with this directly because in the history of the church, it's a bad track record. Some of you this morning may be sitting here having experienced it being done badly.

Whether you have been a victim of that, whether you have known others who have suffered that, whether you have seen churches implode over it being handled poorly.

the public nature of the abuse scandal in our culture and in our country makes it necessary to do this.

So let's talk about it. I want to allay your fears by addressing very directly what would happen. What would happen if there was an accusation of sexual assault abuse in our church?

[28 : 02] First of all, would we apply 1 Corinthians 6, 1 through 8 to this? Basically, the answer is no. We don't think it applies directly.

We don't think that it's addressing a similar situation. What would we do? Some of this comes straight from our sexual abuse policy that's publicly printed on our website.

You can find it under Children's Ministry if you want to go see what it looks like. First of all, we secure the safety of the one who has allegedly been abused.

Secondly, we remove the accused from any further opportunity to continue their abuse. and then we would call the police.

Within 12 hours is what's in our standard. We would remove the accused from any further responsibility or role within our church that might give them access to or opportunity to do any other abuse.

[29 : 13] We would fully cooperate with the police investigation. We'd not only call them and invite them but we would seek to bring every fact to light for them so that they can do their role in investigating a criminal case.

Why would we do this? Well, first, because it's not a trivial matter. Abuse destroys people's lives. It also destroys the integrity of our gospel community and the witness of the church.

For us to do anything less than to bring it to light and to see it followed through would be to dishonor Christ more than it would be to misguidedly try to hide it.

to do to do this. Because it is a crime and we would recognize that the government has a proper role in investigating the claim.

Thirdly, we would see that the government's role in investigating this claim is a part of God's gracious work in this situation. situation. This is probably one of the places where it's hardest for us to understand.

[30 : 36] But what the police do is to try to establish the facts of the case so that they can determine whether the crime was actually committed and if it was, then there are appropriate consequences that are brought down.

Now I know our justice system isn't perfect, but it's the only one we have. And so we would invite that and we would see their role in prosecuting an offender as God's gracious discipline upon, assuming the offender was a member of our church or a participant in our community, we would see the consequences of it as a part of God's gracious discipline in their lives.

We would seek, for them to confess their sin fully. We would seek for them to know the forgiveness that is in Christ, that there is no sin that is unforgivable, but we would also see that the consequences of their sin are a part of God's gracious discipline in their lives.

And so we might love them and seek their restoration and even forgive them, but we might also throw them in jail for their good.

That's hard for us to swallow, but that's the policy. We as the elders would be committed to shepherd both the victim and the accused through the process.

[32 : 13] Here's what it says. This is the instructions to us as the elders. Do not prejudge the situation, but take the allegations seriously. Reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Showing care and support will help to prevent further hurt.

Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and the safety of the victim is the first priority. Treat the accused as well with dignity and support.

So that's how we would want to work it. That's the stance that the elders would want to take. We would let the civil court, the government, do their job.

And as we come alongside the victim, we would want to bring comfort support and help and support.

We want to rebuild in them a trust in the community and a sense of safety. We would pursue understanding the truth of what happened.

[33 : 23] And if necessary, we would pursue 1 Corinthians 5, the church discipline of one in our midst who would do something against a brother or sister like that.

that's what it would look like. I take time to address all this because I think it's one of the major reasons why we have such a hard time imagining that we would trust the church to judge anything well because we haven't done this well historically and publicly.

I hope that my laying out of how we would do it, maybe some of you are shocked by it, maybe some of you are thinking well that's not very forgiving. Maybe some of you are thinking are you sure that's enough?

We'd be glad to engage with you more if you need to, if you want to process that with us as the elders. But I hope that it restores or helps build in your heart and mind in some measure a sense of why we can do this, why we can trust the church to have judgment because this is how we would handle it if something like that happened.

The church has far too often misapplied 1 Corinthians 6 in these kinds of cases in a way that has been very destructive and unhelpful.

[35 : 00] So how do we apply it? Let's transition. This is our third point. Two case studies I want to think about so that you can think through how do we actually do this?

Case study number one, the case of the unpaid rent. I really wanted to wear a Judge Judy robe today so I could bang on the gavel and just have us step into the courtroom for a minute, right?

How do we do this, right? You're the owner of a house that has an apartment in it that you rent out to someone else. You rent it to a Christian, you find out after six months that they are two months behind.

You depend on that rental income to stay above water with your mortgage and tax payments in the long run so it's pretty important to have your money. How do you respond?

Run it through the paradigm of this passage and the principles that we see here. How do we do this? First of all, what I want you to see is that the place it needs to start is our own heart.

[35 : 58] Are you annoyed? Are you impatient? Are you treating this fellow believer as a cash source rather than a person with a life and a soul? Are you peeved at them for other things and see background as an opportunity to evict them or to get vengeance on the ways that you've been slighted or dishonored in your working relationship with them?

Are you really seeking biblical justice? Are you just trying to get your piece of the pie? How are you loving this fellow believer even as you are confronting them?

So first, check your heart. But then secondly, address the issue. Go to them and say, brother, sister, two months behind.

What's going on? How can we resolve this? I need the money. You need to follow through on your commitments. How do we do this? Let's try to solve this.

Let's try to work together. Let's try to be creative. Let's address this as a relationship between two people who ultimately want the same thing because we're brothers and sisters in Christ.

[37 : 12] We don't want this, there to be an outstanding debt between us. So let's figure out how we can resolve it. Explore mutually beneficial solutions, think creatively, be sober.

Now, in an ideal world, that would resolve everything, right? And then we'd be able to go home. But we know that that's not true. And so sometimes when we address this, if we get no response or if they're unwilling to pay, unwilling to acknowledge or just say, I can't pay it, sorry.

It's not my problem anymore. Right? What do you do? 1 Corinthians 6 is very clear. You involve the church.

You involve the elders or other mature Christians. Maybe we have Christians in our midst who have mediatorial skills and gifting and training. Bring the church into it to resolve the dispute.

church. If for some reason this local church isn't the right place to do it, there are some great national resources for you as a part of the broader body of Christ.

[38 : 26] The Christian Legal Society has a great website that gives some of these things. Look up mediation. The Christian Legal Society, there's some great resources there. There's a whole ministry out there called Peacemakers that has some really, really good things.

Systems. They will even provide mediation in certain circumstances. Both of these can help you think through this with brothers and sisters.

Not outside in the courts, but with brothers and sisters who can help you resolve it. But friends, don't take runoff to Judge Judy and get your five minutes of fame and \$5,000 of rewards.

Bring it to the church. Bring it to us. Let us walk with you through this process. Let us help you work through the dispute.

And you know what? If there's not a successful resolution after all of that, there are a couple of things that might happen. One is that if the delinquent guy is just being irresponsible, the church might begin chapter five, church discipline, on a brother who's being ungodly in his behavior towards someone else.

[39 : 52] That's not right. If you steadfastly refuse to pay a debt that you promised you would pay within the church, that is not a good thing, brothers and sisters, and we would begin the process.

That's part of what the elders would do. But for you, who are the offended party, you have a choice. This is where verse seven and eight come in. Are you willing to be defrauded?

Are you willing to lose what is rightfully yours for the sake of the unity and the love of the body? Have you wrestled with that question honestly before the Lord?

Lord, the New Testament is full of places where we are pointed to overlooking offenses, forbearing with one another, being patient with one another, allowing love to cover a multitude of sins.

Now this is not the trump card that says there is no other way to deal with it, but this is the tenor and the tone of a Christian heart, of a gospel-shaped community as we try to address these kinds of disputes and conflicts.

[41 : 12] Don't run off to court to sue this person first, but pursue every means of reconciliation and resolution within the church.

church. This is what God would want you to do. I wanted to take a few more minutes to think about a second case study, one that doesn't require money and one that might be slightly further afield from the direct application of this passage, but might be much closer to home in terms of how I think this goes in our own church community, what it might look like.

It's not a monetary issue or a criminal issue, but it's a relational issue. Here's this case study. Two Christians have an argument with one another over comments that one made in public insinuating that the other had been an unfit and neglectful employee and had deserved their recent dismissal from their job.

These comments happened in the context where the unemployed might potentially be employable by some of the others in the conversation.

So the one who made the comments said, we weren't talking about you. We were talking about the principles of how you think about how you run your company, what you expect from your employees.

[42 : 55] It was hypothetical without any reference to a person. The Hurt Party, however, saw that every detail of the hypothetical applied to them.

And it believed it to be a thinly veiled attack meant to keep the person from being employed. So, though the core issue is still relational, there are some material and very real things at stake in this conflict.

How do you resolve that? First, check your heart. Why is it so painful and difficult to hear someone say something about you?

Is it true? Are you ashamed of it? Secondly, is there a proud, defensive spirit in your heart?

If you were to go after them and sue them for slander, loss of employment potential, would you do it really for justice or just because you're really mad because you feel so publicly humiliated, spoken poorly of?

[44 : 17] What do you seek to gain? What do you seek to gain from a suit like this? Are you going to actually get anywhere? You might be proven right, but are you really any more employable?

Even the \$5,000, is that going to actually assuage the hurt or address the core issues? Are you actually acting in love towards this brother or sister?

Are you just protecting yourself and your reputation, trying so hard to pursue this publicly? So first, check your heart. Secondly, go to the person privately.

Give them a chance to explain. Share with them how hurtful it was, how damaging you thought it could be. Give them a chance to honestly respond.

Maybe they need to confess they're wrong if it was wrong. Maybe they didn't understand the consequences of their hypothetical words.

[45 : 24] Maybe there's a way they can address the potential harm that you see, even if they didn't do anything wrong. Seek for ways to resolve it relationally and lovingly.

What if that doesn't work? This is where I think this passage can really help. Do you really think the church will help you at that moment? When Joe so-and-so totally threw me under a bus at the cocktail party, do I really think the church can help me?

Do you really believe that those who will one day judge the world and the angels can help you work through this dispute? Paul says, take it to the church.

Take it to the elders. Take it so that you have others with wisdom and grace and a commitment to righteousness and mercy who can help you, help mediate and help resolve this dispute.

Judge Judy is not going to do that. Take it to the church. And again, friends, even if it's not satisfactorily resolved to your liking, will you be the offended party, be willing to bear the wrong rather than destroy the unity of the body?

[46 : 58] So often, in cases like this, there is neither confrontation nor mediation nor resolution. There is just cold distance, backbiting and unkind comments, awkward avoidance, and a crippling disunity of the body where brothers and sisters, though pretending to be together, in their hearts are not.

Can you bear the cost? Can you bear the weight of being wronged and defrauded?

Can you bear words spoken badly of you for the sake of Christ? For friends, this is where we go.

This passage points us just in hints to the gospel solution. But remember what we've looked at in 1 Corinthians 1 through 4. Do you remember how he says there is a way of the world which is about pride and about getting ahead and about stepping on other people to get there if you need to, exalting yourself and putting down those around you in the process.

This arrogance and pride that does this. And Paul said, this is not the church, friends, because the church is led by a Savior who did not count equality with God something to be grasped.

[48 : 37] But he made himself nothing. He emptied himself and took on the form of a servant. He bore not only the physical beating and the physical pain of our sins, but Jesus also was accused of unrighteousness.

He was called a blasphemer. He was wronged and defrauded in every way by the very people who should have seen him and acknowledged him and welcomed him and honored him.

And he came from his father, who, as we read earlier in Deuteronomy, is a father who is not partial, takes no bribe, but who executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, who loves those who are vulnerable, those who might be taken advantage of by others.

This God, who is a God of justice and a God of love, sent his son into the world, and this son humbled himself and was wronged for us.

Friends, this is what ought to characterize his church. This is the one that we are called to serve, a God who loves enough to be wronged so that we might be made right.

[50 : 14] There was no self-protection in Jesus. There was no vindictive retribution. There was no passionate greed for his own gain.

There was no playing the victim for his own benefit. He became a victim of one of the greatest injustices in the world for our redemption, for our salvation, to make us a people who will be holy.

And he calls us to love our brothers and sisters with justice, with sacrificial mercy, for his glory.

Let's pray. Oh, Lord, this is a hard passage. Lord, for it shakes us in our commitment to our own rights, to our own freedoms.

Lord, it calls us to follow in the pattern of Christ who humbled himself and suffered for us. Lord, will you give us a vision of our church?

[51 : 32] Lord, that is truly a loving community where we pursue justice and holiness for our own happiness, for your glory, that pursues righteousness and mercy so that we might reflect the very core nature of the salvation that we have in Christ.

Lord, help us, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.