

January 3rd, 2021

# Can Christians Go to Court?

1 Corinthians 6:1-8

## The principle error

At first glance, the contrast between chapters five and six make the Corinthians *appear* to be very inconsistent. In chapter five, they were guilty of tolerating grave sexual sins in the assembly. Here in chapter six, they are guilty of *not-tolerating* small injuries and thereby taking each other to court. In chapter five, they were *antinomians* because they abused their liberty. In chapter six, they were *legalists* because they refused to suffer small injuries. They seemed to vacillate between two opposite errors. But the truth is, both of these errors spring from one error. The Corinthian Church failed to see the Church as the body of Christ.<sup>1</sup> They failed to see that because they were in union with Christ, they were also in union with each other. But the Corinthians were living for themselves. That's why they ignored their brother who was destroying himself with sexual sin in chapter five. And that's why they were taking other Christians to court here in chapter six, because they cared more about their own honor and property than they did about their own brothers and sisters in Christ.

## The main problem in Church life

Dear congregation, this is *the* main problem in Church life. So often we fail to grasp the profound change that happened to us when Christ united us to Himself—namely that we have been united to each other. Christ has created *in Himself* one new man in place of the two,<sup>2</sup> we have been baptized into one body

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<sup>1</sup> So much help here in this argument from Thomas Charles Edwards, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, (Published by Forgotten Books 2012, Originally Published 1885), pg. 120

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 2:15

and made to drink of one Spirit,<sup>3</sup> if one member suffers, all suffer together; and if one member is honored, all rejoice together.<sup>4</sup> We are no long our own, but we now belong to each other in Christ Jesus. Therefore, whether we take each other to court or not, if we fail to patiently bear injuries from others just as Christ has done for us, then we bring contempt on the gospel in front of the watching world. That's where Paul is taking us this morning.

### *The Big Idea...*

Christians have an obligation to patiently bear injuries from one another just as Christ has borne all ours

☆The Argument (v.1-4)

☆The Injury (v.5-6)

☆The Verdict (v.7-8)

## I. The Argument

### **Who are the unrighteous?**

Paul begins his third rebuke against the Corinthians.<sup>5</sup> Christians were taking their fellow Christians to court to settle their disputes. Please look with me at v.1 “When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before *the unrighteous* instead of *the saints*?” When Paul mentions *the unrighteous* and *the saints*, he's *not* referring to the moral character of each group. He's referring to the *spiritual standing* of each group. Every Christian just is a

<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:13

<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:26

<sup>5</sup> His first rebuke was their party spirit which he addressed in ch.1-4, and his second was their allowing gross sexual sin to go undisciplined in ch.5.

saint, because all his sins have been imputed to Christ, and Christ's righteousness has been imputed to them. But non-Christians are called *the unrighteous* because they have not been justified by Christ, and therefore do not have any righteousness. That's important to see, because Paul's argument is *not* primarily about the moral character of unbelievers.

### What Paul is *not* saying...

The question Paul is asking in **v.1** is "...does he [the Christian] dare to go to law before *the unrighteous* [the non-Christian]?" There are so many land mines here, so we need to start with what Paul is *not* saying. **First**, Paul is *not* forbidding Christians from using the courts.<sup>6</sup> Paul himself appealed to Caesar to protect himself from the injustice of his own countrymen (**Acts 25:11**). Often it is prudent for Christians to use courts to protect themselves. The great 18th century evangelist George Whitefield had to file charges against rioters who were violently attacking him other Christians. They were found guilty in court and forced to stop.<sup>7</sup> Paul does not at all condemn that use of the courts.<sup>8</sup>

**Secondly**, Paul is not saying that Christians should ignore criminal cases. I've heard tragic stories of Church leaders covering up child abuse using this text as justification. Paul is not talking about criminal cases, but civil cases. We know this because of the way Paul describes these cases. In **v.1** he calls them *grievances*. In **Acts 5:4** the same Greek word is used to describe Ananias and Sapphira's shady business deal.<sup>9</sup> So contextually, *grievance* points to some

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<sup>6</sup> Moses appointed judges in Exodus 18 and Deuteronomy 1. Samuel, David, Jehoshaphat, and Ezra also appointed judges in 1 Sam. 8:1; 1 Chronicles 23:4; 2 Chronicles 19:5-11; Ezra 7:25; 10:14.

<sup>7</sup> "But having accomplished his purpose - having shown the rioters they could be taken to court and punished - Whitefield chose to forgive them and therewith let the matter drop." Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield: The Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of the Eighteenth-Century Revival*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2009), pg. 170

<sup>8</sup> Likewise if a Christian is subpoenaed to court, he doesn't sin by going

<sup>9</sup> "While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this **deed** in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God."

business transaction or monetary or property dispute—a civil case. Furthermore Paul calls these *trivial cases* in **v.2**, and finally in **v.7-8** he said this was a matter of being “*defrauded*” which is being robbed from or deprived of something. So Paul is not talking about criminal cases. It is wrong to use this text to cover up crimes.

**Thirdly**, Paul is not saying that justice cannot be found in the court system. Paul experienced justice in Corinth by the Roman judge Gallio in Acts 18 when he was wrongly accused by the Jews. Nor is Paul saying that unbelieving judges and lawyers are less intelligent than Christians. Being a Christian doesn’t make you more intelligent than anybody. Paul’s argument is not in any of these things.<sup>10</sup>

### What Paul *is* saying...

What then is Paul’s argument? Simply this: when Christians take other Christians to court over these trivial matter, it lies about what a Christian is. Someone might object and say: “But didn’t the Lord give us the government—including courts—as His servant to punish evil conduct? Isn’t that what Romans 13 teaches: that God gave us courts to help settle disputes?” How do we answer? Yes God did give us courts to help settle disputes. It is not wrong *in itself* to go to court, sometimes it is good and necessary.<sup>11</sup> But it is wrong and it lies about what a Christian *is* when he takes other Christians to court for trivial cases. How does it lie about what a Christian is? Look at **v.2** “Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world?” Stop. Christian, you are going to take part in judging unbelievers on the Last Day. **Psalm 149:5** “Let the godly exult in glory.” That is, in the age to come. Why? Because, **v.7-9**, they will “execute vengeance on the nations and punishments on the peoples...[they will] execute on them the judgment written! This is honor for all his godly ones.

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<sup>10</sup> Perhaps one more thing Paul is not arguing: he’s not saying that civil disputes should be brought before the assembled Church in some kind of ecclesiastical court. cf. T.C. Edwards, pg. 137

<sup>11</sup> cf. John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries Vol. XX*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: BakerBooks, 2009), pg. 206-207

Praise the Lord!” **Revelation 3:21** “The one who conquers, *I will grant him to sit with me on my throne*, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.”<sup>12</sup> So Paul’s argument is a greater to lesser argument. Look at the end of v.2 “And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases?” Charles Hodge puts it like this: “If you are to sit with Christ on the seat of universal judgment, are you unworthy of the lowest judgment seats?”<sup>13</sup>

But Paul argues further in v.3 “Do you not know that we are to judge angels?” Stop. We will take part in judging fallen angels. “Thus all the devils in hell, who have so opposed Christ and his kingdom, shall...at last stand in utmost amazement and horror before Christ and his church, who shall appear to condemn them.”<sup>14</sup> But the word *judge* in Greek also means to rule and reign. In the next age, the righteous angels who are above us in glory now, will be below us. Because of our union with Christ, we will have an even higher status than the angels who have never sinned. So Paul again argues from the greater to the lesser in v.3. Essentially he is saying this: ‘If you are to be exalted even about the angels and judge them, can you not judge matter pertaining to this life.’<sup>15</sup> v.4 “So if you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church?” That’s our **first point**. Paul’s argument is that when Christians take Christians to court it lies about what a Christian *is*. Though we will take part in judging the whole cosmos with the Lord Jesus Christ, we are incompetent to judge infinitely smaller matters.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> also cf. Daniel 7:22; Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30; Jude 1:14-15; Revelation 2:26-27; Revelation 20:4

<sup>13</sup> Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2018), pg. 95

<sup>14</sup> Source: <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1.xii.vi.xiii.html?scrBook=1Cor&scrCh=6&scrV=3#xii.vi.xiii-p19.1> Accessed January 2, 2021

<sup>15</sup> Hodge paraphrases it thus: “Know ye not that we are to be exalted above the angels, and preside over them; shall we not then preside over earthly things?” Hodge, pg. 95

<sup>16</sup> Though we will judge the unrighteous on eternal things, we need them to judge our earthly things. “They acted *unworthily* of their dignity as Christians in seeking justice from such a source.” *ibid*, pg. 94

## II. The Injury

### A three-fold shame

Please look at v.5 “I say this to your *shame*.” Now shame is deeper than guilt. “Guilt...is the feeling of doing something wrong, [but] **shame** is the feeling of *being* something wrong.”<sup>17</sup> By taking each other to court, the Corinthians were doing wrong (they had guilt), but Paul is saying something more. Because their sin was so public, they were making it a shameful thing to be called a Christian. After WWII, so many Germans were ashamed to be known as Germans because of the atrocities their nation committed. They were ashamed of being German. Paul is saying, that when Christians take Christians to court, it becomes shameful to be known as a Christian. ‘Instead of being a light to the world, you are giving the world reasons to never become a Christian.’ Why? Paul gives three reasons.

#### 1. Taking other Christians to court says the Church has no wisdom

Please look at the second part of v.5, Paul asks “Can it be that there is no one among you *wise* enough to settle a dispute between the brothers?” Do you sense Paul’s sarcasm? Remember how in chapters one through four, the Corinthians were boasting about how wise they were? Now Paul turning it back on them: ‘I thought you were wise. Is there nobody wise enough in the Church to handle such a case?’ But Paul is not just be sarcastic. He’s pointing out a serious problem. When a person becomes a Christian, he becomes a new creation (**2 Cor. 5:17**); he becomes a partaker of the divine nature (**2 Peter 1:4**). A Christian is enriched in every way in Christ, in all speech and knowledge (**1 Corinthians 1:5**). If this is happened to us, if we now have the mind of Christ, are we not capable of settling disputes between fellow Christians? If not, how would non-Christians be capable? Furthermore, why would a non-believer ever be compelled to become a Christian if all they see from the Church is ignorant

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<sup>17</sup> Source: <https://psychcentral.com/lib/shame-the-quintessential-emotion/> accessed November 25, 2017

Christians unable to settle their own problems? Do you see? Taking other Christians to court proclaims to the world that the Church has no wisdom in it.

## 2. Taking other Christians to court says the Church has no love

Continuing the thought in v.6, Paul says "...but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers?" Notice Paul has changed his descriptors. In v.1, Paul called them *unrighteous*, now he calls them *unbelievers*. One would expect that Paul to be consistent and call us believers in v.6. But he doesn't. He calls us brothers. In v.5-8 Paul calls us *brothers* four times.

v.5 "Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the *brothers*?"

v.6 "...but *brother* goes to law against *brother*..."

v.8 "But you yourselves wrong and defraud—even your own *brothers*!"

What is it that testifies to the world that we are Jesus's disciples? Brotherly love. Jesus said in **John 13:35** "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have *love for one another*." When David first came into King Saul's service, Jonathan his son immediately loved David, because they were *brothers by faith in the Lord God*. **1 Samuel 18:1-4** says "...the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan *loved him as his own soul*...Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt."<sup>18</sup> Jonathan's love of David is *the picture* of the Lord Jesus loving us. Jesus loves us as His own soul. He made a covenant with us in His own blood. He stripped Himself of His robes of righteousness and gave them to us, and all things—His armor, His sword, His

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<sup>18</sup> Jonathan had the hereditary right to be king. It passed from father to son. But in giving him his robe, armor, sword, bow and belt, he was giving up this right to David.

bow, His belt—are ours because in Christ we have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. Jonathan reflected that loved to David. He gave up everything to David, because David was his brother in Christ. Jonathan and David are the picture of how Christian brothers and sisters ought to be towards each other.

The brothers and sisters in Corinth weren't willing to give up *anything* to each other. In fact, they went to court to make sure they kept their stuff, their honor, their reputation. What does that say to the world? What does that say to our children, our co-workers, our unsaved family members? Taking other Christians to court proclaims to the world that the Church has no love in it. But there is something far more shameful.

### 3. Taking other Christians to court says the Church has a worthless Christ

The main reason why this sin is so shameful is because it makes Jesus look bad. The whole Christian ethic could be boiled down to one question: Will this (fill-in-the-blank) activity make Jesus Christ look good? Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones told his congregation in the last century “As you walk the streets of London remember you have got the reputation of God in your hands.”<sup>19</sup> What did he mean? He meant that it is impossible to not be a witness for Jesus Christ. You can witness truly or falsely, but you cannot avoid witnessing, because everything you do reflects upon Him. We will *either* let our light shine so that others will see our good works and give glory to our Father in Heaven (**Matthew 5:16**); *or* the name of God will be blasphemed among the Gentiles because of us (**Romans 2:24**). But we will never give a neutral witness. There's no such thing. We either glorifying Jesus in our lives or bringing Him shame.

What was the Corinthian's witness to the watching world? That this Jesus whom they worshipped *had no wisdom*—because no one was wise enough among them to settle their disputes; and this Jesus *had no love*—because His followers, these brothers, were taking each other to court. Don't misunderstand me. I'm

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<sup>19</sup> Iain Murray, *D.M. Lloyd-Jones: The Fight of Faith 1939-1981* (Carlisle, PA.,: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2009), pg. 400

not arguing that we must hide our sins from unbelievers. That unbelievers can never see our faults and shortcomings. Someone might conclude that. “Well Pastor Josh, I must not ever let an unbeliever see my sin, because I don’t want Jesus to be shamed in their sight.” I’m not saying that. Sin in this age is unavoidable (cf. **Romans 7:18**). What I’m saying, what I believe Paul is saying, is not that we hide our sins from unbelievers, but rather we show the world “... that the cross of Christ is God’s solution to all [our] problems...including our disputes with one another.”<sup>20</sup>

### **The first heresy of the Church**

Don’t you see, what a pathetic Savior we peddle to the world if we say that Jesus can save us from eternal punishment, but He is not sufficient to help us settle our disputes with one another? This is always the first heresy a Church commits on it’s way to apostasy. It’s such a subtle heresy, because it affirms right things, namely that “that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...” (1 **Timothy 1:15**). But it fails to declare Jesus Christ and Him crucified as the solution to the rest of our problems. We need other things. We need psychology or philosophy or the courts, or the right politicians, to really live a fulfilled life. What does that say about our Savior?

That’s our **second point**. The injuries we inflict when we bring other Christians to court are **1) We show the world we have no wisdom. 2) We show the world we have no love. 3) We show the world we have a insufficient Christ.**

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<sup>20</sup> Kim Riddlebarger, *The Lectio Continua: Expository Commentary on the New Testament: First Corinthians*, (Powder Springs, GA.,: Tolle Lege Press, 2013), pg. 142

### III. The Verdict

#### You are already defeated

Paul immediately gives the verdict in v.7 “To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a *defeat* for you.” There’s two ways to understand this defeat. **First**, no one ultimately wins in these trivial lawsuits. I spoke with an attorney from our congregation yesterday and she gave a very bleak picture of the reality behind lawsuits like this. Generally the trial is not set for a long time, a year or longer. The effects of having that hang over your head for such a long time can cause emotional distress and anxiety—in the end one of her clients was enslaved—his daily life being controlled by what was going to happen. These lawsuits divide friends, and family, and often most of money that is up for grabs gets spent on lawyer’s fees. Another attorney commented that whenever he could get believers to drop their lawsuits against each other “...without exception, those believers have been blessed. Also without exception, those who insisted on resolving their disputes in court became bitter and resentful—whether they won or lost their cases. If they went to court they always lost spiritually.”<sup>21</sup> Point being, that even if you win in court, as a Christian you lose.

#### The thin-skinned Christian

But I think it’s **second** type of defeat that Paul *mainly* has in view. Think about the word defeat. When a army is defeated, it is because they were not able to bear up under the attack of their enemy. Calvin points out here that the *defeat* Paul has in view is when a Christian has a weakness of spirit, such that he is easily broken down by offense and cannot patiently bear any injury.<sup>22</sup> In other words, Paul has the thin-skinned Christian in view. What is a thin-skinned Christian? A thin-skinned Christian is one who is easily offended and difficult to be reconciled to. They are prone to revenge because they don’t have

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<sup>21</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Corinthians*, (Chicago, IL.: Moody Publishers, 1984), pg. 140

<sup>22</sup> Calvin, pg. 204

enough love for others to overlook faults. As one pastor said “Thin-skinned Christians ruin and wreck churches.”<sup>23</sup> Why? Because Churches are messy places, and thin skinned Christians can’t control themselves enough to suffer injuries patiently.<sup>24</sup> And so they sue.

### **“But I’ve never taken anyone to court”**

Perhaps some of you think this doesn’t apply to you because you have never taken another Christian to court. But that is not the root issue.<sup>25</sup> Are you prepared to patiently bear injuries from other Christians? Do you have other Christians that you have written off in your heart? If so, then you are already deserving of Paul’s rebuke. You are already defeated. The heart attitude *itself* is un-Christian. Paul is showing us the true nature of the sin before it even goes to court. If you can’t bear up under injuries done to you by other Christians, you are already defeated.

### **Whitefield and Wesley**

When the Great Awakening began George Whitefield and John Wesley were the best of friends. But as they started to part ways theologically, Wesley began attacking Whitefield’s doctrine opening and causing divisions within the Methodist movement. It was actually Whitefield who began the Methodist movement, it’s origin being Calvinistic. Parties starting lining up behind the men. There were buildings and properties and great monies involved. Which party was going to retain them? Some of Whitefield followers were so angry with Wesley that it seems most likely they would have gone to court to sue the assets had Whitefield simply said the word. Tragically some of these men had already written each other off. They were unable to patiently bear injuries from other Christians. But Whitefield had a spirit of brokenness. His friend Howell

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<sup>23</sup> Source: <https://illbehonest.com/thin-skinned-christians-ruin-churches> Accessed January 2, 2021

<sup>24</sup> Calvin, pg. 204

<sup>25</sup> How do such things as court cases start? They start in the heart.

Harris recalls finding him in those days "...sick and vomiting, he wept with strong cryings and weeping...poured out his soul before the Lord."<sup>26</sup> Rather than see any further division, Whitefield simply gave up the two properties in question and decided he start over. Whitefield latter wrote: "O let us be meek and quite! O let us wait and we shall see the salvation of God. While others are disputing, let us be growing. This will be the best way to convince those, who you find will not be convinced by any other way."<sup>27</sup>

### **Why not be defrauded?**

Whitefield was willing to be wronged and defrauded by his brother. That's the very thing that Paul calls us to do. Please look at the last part of **v.7-8** "Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? But *you yourselves* [one commentator paraphrases: "You of all of men!"<sup>28</sup>] wrong and defraud—even your own brothers!" So Paul *only* gives two solutions in this passage for when you suffer injury from another Christian. **First**, in **v.5** he tells us we ought to seek a wise Christian in the Church to serve as a mediator. **Secondly**, if that fails he tells us to suffer the abuse and injustice willingly. "Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?" It is better to suffer the wrong, than take another Christian to court. There simply is no other Christ-honoring way to deal with such injuries.

### **Why is this so hard?**

Dear congregation, why is this so hard? Why are we so resistant to patiently bear the injuries of another Christian? Because we are still so full of ourselves. Loved ones, when you *must have* "justice" what are you saying about yourself? Three things. **First** you are saying that you deserve to be loved, you

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<sup>26</sup> Dallimore, pg. 74

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*, pg. 75

<sup>28</sup> T.C. Edwards, pg. 142

are entitled to it.<sup>29</sup> Is that true? What does God say about you oh man? You are dust and ashes (**Genesis 18:27**); a lowly worm (**Job 25:6**). **Psalm 144:4** “Man is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow.” **Psalm 62:9** “Those of low estate are but a breath; those of high estate are a delusion; in the balances they go up; they are together lighter than a breath.” You and I are the reason that the earth is curse. The whole creation groans in the pains of childbirth because it bears with sinners like us (**Romans 8:22**). That is what is true about us. Are we worthy of honor, and love and esteem? No. If you are unwilling to patiently bear the injuries of other Christians, you have forgotten that. You have forgotten that what you deserve is condemnation and hell.

**Secondly**, if you are the kind of person that *must have* “justice” you are saying that your honor, reputation and possessions *still belong to you*. But what does Jesus say? “If anyone comes to me and does not hate...even his own life, he cannot be my disciple...any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple” (**Luke 14:26, 33**). Why does the Lord give us honor and reputation and possessions? So that we can be spent in His service. Whenever George Whitefield came under attack, he would say: “Let my name be forgotten, let me be trodden under the feet of all men if Jesus may thereby be glorified. Let my name die everywhere, let even my friends forget me, if by that means the cause of the blessed Jesus may be promoted.”<sup>30</sup> Whitefield “...surrendered his honor to the Lord Jesus, and it no longer belonged to him.”<sup>31</sup> Loved ones if you are unwilling to patiently bear under the injuries of other Christians, you are acting as if these things still belong to you.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> You would never be able to carry on a dispute with another Christian if your impatience and self-importance was taken away. Calvin, pg. 205

<sup>30</sup> Dallimore, pg. 257-258

<sup>31</sup> Wilhelmus A. Brakel, *The Christian's Reasonable Service: Vol. 3 The Law, Christian Graces, and the Lord's Prayer*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Reformation Heritage Books, 1994), pg. 406

<sup>32</sup> “A person who denies self has freedom, for he has nothing to lose. He fears neither shame, hatred, nor damaged to his possessions, for he has renounced all this—and whatever the Lord has loaned to him he will readily return to Him if he requires this.” *Ibid*, pg. 411

**Thirdly**, if you are the kind of person that *must have* “justice” you are saying that Jesus can’t satisfy you, but your honor, reputation and possessions can. Your Savior is *not* sufficient, but stuff and your stature are. The Lord warned against this. “...What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?”<sup>33</sup> What good would it do you if all injuries done to were made right but you forfeit Jesus, would that satisfy you? Paul said in **Philippians 3:8** “I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake *I have suffered the loss of all things* and count them as rubbish, *in order that I may gain Christ.*” Don’t you see? If you are unwilling to patiently bear under the injuries of other Christians, you are communicating that Jesus is unable to satisfy you if you lose all things.

### What motives does Scripture give you?

So then, what motives does Scripture give us to patiently bear injuries from other Christians? **First of all**, if you can’t bear injuries from others, if you can’t forgive others, then you are not a Christian. Jesus once told a parable of an unforgiving servant. A king graciously forgave his debt, a debt that he couldn’t pay back even if he had several lifetimes. But then this wicked servant went out and found a fellow servant who owed him just a few dollars, and choked him and turned him over to the jailers until he paid it back. When the king found out, he handed the wicked man over to the torturers until he paid back his unpayable debt. Jesus then said “So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart” (**Matthew 18:35**). Dear friend, you *can’t* save yourself from hell by being a good person and forgiving others. But if you are *not* a forgiving person, it proves that you have not delivered from your sin. You are still guilty. That’s Jesus’ point. On that Day when the books are opened and you stand before the throne, God will judge you according to your record, and what a terrifying day that will be for you. On the one hand, you will see all the mercies that God has given you in this life; and on the other, you will see all how you have scorned Him, and have

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<sup>33</sup> Mark 8:36

treated others with contempt. The verdict spoken over you will be “this one lived only for himself.”<sup>34</sup> And you will be thrown into the fiery furnace, punished until your unpayable debt is complete, which the Scripture says is never. **Revelation 14:11** says “the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night.” There will be no escape on that day. But there is escape today. The Scripture says “Today is the day of salvation.” Today Jesus Christ is offered to you. He came into the world to save sinners like you. The Scripture says that if you receive Him, if you believe on His name, you will not come into judgment, but you will pass from death to life. Jesus will forgive you, and for the first time in your life you will be able to forgive others from the heart. Once you belong to Him, all things are made new. Once you belong to Him, you will be free. “If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”<sup>35</sup>

**Secondly**, for the saints: God will *reward you* for patiently bearing injuries from other Christians. Think of King David’s life. Think how God vindicated him time and time again when he suffered under the injuries of Nabal, of King Saul, of Shimei, of Absalom. God never failed in reward David for not taking vengeance into His own hands. And this is the promise for you beloved. **Matthew 10:39** “...whoever loses his life for my sake will find” **Matthew 19:29** “And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.” If the Lord rewards a cup of cold water in His name (**Matthew 10:42**), then certainly He will reward those who patiently bear injuries for His sake.

**Finally**, your greatest motive for patiently suffering wrong from others is that Christ suffered for you. Beloved how many times have you wronged and defrauded Christ? Before God made you a Christian, what kind of blasphemer and liar and hater of God were you? Though you deserved the eternal wrath of God, Christ bore your wickedness with infinite patience. But think about after

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<sup>34</sup> “All your restlessness is the result of a seeking of yourself.” Brakel, pg. 410

<sup>35</sup> John 8:36

God made you a Christian. How many times have you dishonored His name? How many times have you promised not to sin in that way again, and how many times have you broken that promise? How many times have you robbed Him of thanksgiving? How many times have you doubted His love? How many times have you ignored His word, grieved His Spirit, lived a life unworthy of the name Christian? And yet there was Christ always bearing with you, always suffering your injuries. Oh think of what Christ has done for you loved one! He who was rich became poor. He who was the glory of Heaven, took upon the form of a servant. He was ridiculed, and despised, and put to shame. Not for His own wrong doing, but for yours.

No one has ever injured you, like you injured Jesus.

No one has ever shamed you, like you shamed Jesus.

No one has ever defrauded you, like you defrauded Jesus.

But Jesus has never written you off. He's never taken you to court. He's never cast you out. On the contrary, He does not deal with us according to your sins, nor repay us according to your iniquities...for as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.<sup>36</sup> Beloved just as Christ has willingly, lovingly and patiently bore all your injuries, so you must do the same with your brethren. **1 John 3:16** "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers."

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<sup>36</sup> Psalm 103:10-12

