

PREFACE

In our last session, on vv4-6, we made the point that Christians are not to be separate, isolated, from the fallen society in which they dwell, but are to be—in their philosophy, their motives, their behavior, their convictions—*distinctive from that society*. They are to stand out, as Jesus described it in His Sermon on the Mount, as “salt” and “light”:

“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)

That is easy to say, perhaps easy to personally resolve—but not always easy to live. You might say, “Well, I am a Christian; that *makes* me different; that *makes* me distinctive.” No, *kemo sabe* (as Tonto would say), it’s not that easy. Some parts of the Christian life are: “Love the LORD” (Psalm 31:23), “Hate evil” (Psalm 97:10), pay your taxes (Luke 20:22-25).

Some aspects of the righteous, obedient Christian life can be more difficult, because they cut straight across the grain of the flesh—our natural tendencies, our acquired taste for the things of this earth, and our inbred reflex of self-defense. It is in our nature to want what we want and to want it *when* we want it. And whenever someone takes from us something we want, it is in our nature to strike out, to strike back and take back.

But then, the Christian life isn’t about our nature; it is, by God’s grace, *in spite of* our nature. This is why there is such a thing as our ongoing sanctification; we must *learn* to live by the Spirit, we must *learn* how to walk with Christ, we must *learn* to live as a Christian. And for that, this world cannot be our teacher.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:7-8.

v7

In our last session we concluded that Paul was not just exercised over the Corinthians taking their disputes to the civil courts, but that in the church they were behaving like adversaries, rather than brothers. Here, in this paragraph, he takes the thought one step further.

Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another.

defeat, failure = *hettema* (hay’-tay-mah) = from <G2274> (hettao); a deterioration, i.e. (object) **failure** or (subject) **loss** ∴ diminishing, fault; **defeat in the sense of suffering great loss (Fee)**.

A. T. Robertson points out that in classical Greek, *nike* (nee'-kay) was victory and *hetta* defeat. In the Septuagint version of Isaiah 31:8 *hetta* is used to express the utter defeat of the Assyrians in battle.

NKJV: "...already an utter failure for you..."

That is, *It makes no difference if you win your case, if you win the argument or the debate in the church; you have already lost, because you were more concerned about your pride, your standing, than the well-being of a brother in Christ.*

Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?

Now we know for sure that we are in another universe. This is not the counsel from this world, this society; it is as foreign to it as day is foreign to night. This world teaches us to defend our rights—in fact, to demand (civil) rights that do not even exist (e.g., abortion, same-sex marriage). When attacked we are to retaliate (except if you are Israel, that is). But the apostle says that it is better to accept the wrong, to let ourselves be defrauded (cheated).

be wronged, suffer wrong = *adikeo* = from <G94> (adikos); to be unjust, i.e. (active) do wrong (moral, socially or physical) :- hurt, injure, be an offender, be unjust, (do, suffer, take) wrong. **This is the verb for the noun translated “unrighteous” or “ungodly” in v1; it covers the whole range of activity that injures or does injustice to another person (Fee)—i.e., this is what the unrighteous do.**

defrauded, cheated = *apostereo* = from <G575> (apo) and stereo (to deprive); to despoil :- defraud, destitute, kept back by fraud. **This word suggests that some kind of property or business dealing is the problem. (Fee)**

Here the apostle addresses, specifically, Christian brothers bringing lawsuits against each other. But he addressed the broader subject earlier in his letter to the Thessalonians. And he will again in his letter to the Romans. **Let's look at that passage.**

Read Romans 12:16-21.

Some have posited that Paul gets this idea from Jewish tradition or even the Greeks. But for the source of this manner of living Paul needed to go no further than the message he brought to the Corinthians: “Christ crucified” (1:23). The disciple Peter didn't understand this principle. He rejected it out of hand when the Savior explained that He, Jesus, must accept being wronged.

Read Matthew 16:21-22.

Jesus' response to Peter was swift and harsh.

Read Matthew 16:23.

Then Jesus explained further: "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." (Matthew 16:24) Christ Jesus Himself is the source for Paul's pointed question, "Why not rather be wronged?"

v8

If your version of the Bible shows a paragraph break at v9, as does mine (NASB), it is unfortunate; it would make more sense to have the break (if at all) with v8, rather than v9. For there is a change of focus with v8—not obvious in the English—that flows into v9.

The key to understanding to whom Paul is speaking is found in the verb tenses of the Greek—keeping in mind that *all of it* is directed toward *everyone* in the church, the church at large, and even us today. Within that, however, he alternates between the plaintiff and defendant. The defendant is the one being "sued" for damages by the plaintiff upon whom the damages have been inflicted.

The verbs in v7—"be wronged," "be defrauded"—are *middle/passive*; that is, the verse could be translated, *Why not rather allow yourself to be wronged? Why not rather allow yourself to be defrauded?* Not clear in English is that even though the words are the same in v8 ("wrong and defraud"), they now switch to the *active* tense. This means that Paul has switched from speaking to the plaintiff (the one wronged) to the defendant (the one who did the wrong). We could outline it thus:

v7: Paul addresses the plaintiff

v8: Paul addresses the defendant

v9: Paul continues addressing the defendant

But, as I have pointed out, all this is also directed toward the church membership (I doubt that this is an isolated case). Perhaps it will help if I put on my director's cap and block this out as a scene in a play. Paul stands center stage, on the raised platform in the church building. He faces the congregation. Before him the litigants stand on the steps going up to the platform; this sets them above the audience, but lower than Paul. Then, of course, the seated audience is the church's real congregation. As Paul speaks in v7, he turns to the plaintiff, down and to his left, but he also speaks from time to time over his head to the congregation ("...it is already a defeat for *all of you*, that you have lawsuits..."). In v8, Paul turns to his right to speak to the defendant, but also to the congregation ("...you *all* [yourselves' (plural 'you')] wrong and defraud...").

Sidebar: Of course (as always, it seems) not all agree. Of my two primary commentators helping me with this study, one says that v8 is addressed to the one who has done the defrauding, while the other says that v8 is still being addressed to the one who has been defrauded and is bringing suit.

On the contrary, you yourselves wrong and defraud. You do this even to your brethren.

The opening word or phrase of v8 (called an adversative) changes with each translation. I think the *Young's Literal Translation* captures it best (mirrored closely in the ESV):

YLT: but ye—ye do injustice, and ye defraud, and these—brethren!

ESV: But you yourselves wrong and defraud—even your own brothers!

It seems clear in this extended passage (vv1-11) that Paul is not just saying, “Now, brothers, play nice. It would be better if you did not behave this way.” His point is that this is *shameful* behavior that cannot be permitted in the church.

Believe it or not, in v9 Paul will take this even a step further ([note the crescendo in this passage](#)), suggesting that the behavior of persistently threatening each other with lawsuits threatens their inheritance in the eternal kingdom of God. We will look at this in our next session.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-10.

It is bad enough what this inflicts on the integrity of the body: contention, strife, factions. But perhaps worse is the violence this inflicts on the witness of the church to the surrounding community. If there is little or no distinction between the church and the fallen, secular world, then what is the point? What good is it? It is then little better than just another social club.

J. Murphy-O'Conner (1979): A united community in which love dominates is the existential affirmation of the truth of the gospel. A community which contains within itself the divisions which characterize the “world” has no power to transform its environment, because the contradiction between theory and practice is too evident (Romans 2:23-24).

The church is to be set apart—sanctified, holy—from the ways of this world. It is to represent Christ and *His* ways to a world badly in need of Him. It is to look different from all the rest.

Read Colossians 3:12-15.