

pursuit.

4. DEFECTION OF BELIEVERS

This is where Paul focuses on the real problem. The Corinthians are actually at fault. They have some deep misunderstandings of the will and purpose of God. How does he argue his point? Consider these elements of the case:-

a. It is a moral defect. v. 7. The Greek word used here means "to remain beneath." It denotes a defeat in a fight or a deterioration when applied to a state of things. The latter is in view here, altho both meanings are applicable. The Corinthians were defeated and had deteriorated.

b. It is a family defect. Note the manifold use of the term "brother" in the context. It does make a difference if you are saved! One's relation to a child of God is absolutely crucial. Internal strife is the worst!

c. It is a spiritual defect. vv. 5, 6. The verb for "judge" (v. 5) is the Greek for "decide." Being aorist, it suggests doing so with the stroke of the pen! It is a case of arbitration and not a process of law (as the present tense of the verb in v. 6). To discredit spiritual wisdom and prefer worldly wisdom is indeed a dreadful conclusion!

d. It is a blinding defect. Paul is full of pathos in this section. He seeks to shame them. (v. 5). He urges them to "let themselves be wronged" (permissive middle) and to "let themselves be robbed" (permissive middle) so as not to darken their witness. It is better to receive injustices (the first verb) and to suffer wrongs in property (the second verb) than to blind unsaved eyes to the cause of Christ! The feeling of "before the unbelievers" (v. 6) is terrific.

Conclusion Does the world know Christ thru us?

BOOK OF FIRST CORINTHIANS

"Forbidden Lawsuits"

I Cor. 6:1-8

Introduction

1. When the Corinthians wrote Paul, there were a great number of items which they did not mention. One of these is the problem of going to law with Christians. But Paul mentioned it to the church, having heard of their laxness in this matter.

2. This chapter continues the difficulty of the lamentable lack of church discipline commenced in the previous chapter. Indeed, this is one of the subjects about which the church was to be exercised, since it concerned internal matters (cf. 5:13).

3. Some have made out that Paul actually wrote against any sort of legal judgments in courts. This is not true, for then he would be contradicting other explicit Scriptures (cf. Rom. 13; Acts 16:37; 25:11).

4. The grave problem raised by the apostle in this chapter concerned lawsuits among Christians. That Paul is indignant about this subject is clear from the word "dare" (v. 1). The word is an argument in its very essence. An immediate appeal is made to Christian dignity. Some had apparently mustered this miserable courage to do something of this nature. How dreadful! An actual case is in Paul's mind, altho he does not mention details.

5. What are the reasons for which Paul denounces this dastardly approach? They are listed in the text. Mark them carefully:-

1. POSITION OF UNBELIEVERS

Comparisons may be odious, but in this case they serve as a strong argument against the practice in Corinth. Here they are:-

a. Unrighteous--saints. v. 1. The use of the

term "unrighteous" in reference to the official judges in question is unusual. One would have expected the simple "unbeliever." The term is used only three times by Paul (cf. Rom. 3:5; I Cor. 6:9). Paul wants to make palpable the contradiction which exists in going to ask justice of those who are themselves devoid of justice. In contrast, believers are referred to as "saints." This points to their dignity. It is a title of honor. Even the Rabbis forbade taking matters before idolatrous judges.

b. Mean--wise. vv. 4, 5. Although it is a matter of debate as to how one is to interpret these rather difficult phrases, it seems apparent that a contrast is in view. It is a contrast so poignant that it hardly seems necessary to debate the issues. Those who are "of no account" is a reference to the heathen judges. They hold no place in the assembly, yet they are appealed to! Surely, on the contrary, there is some sort of "wise man" in the church who is capable of dealing with the problems raised. What a wonderful victory would be gained amongst the saints if they would recognize summarily that the world holds no candle with the children of God--in any situation! God have mercy upon us for seeking their judgment of our problems!

2. RELATION OF WORLD-ORDER. vv. 2, 3.

Elsewhere the Word teaches that believers will be sharing with the Lord in eschatological judgments (cf. Dan. 7:22; Matt. 19:28; Rev. 2:26, 27; 20:4). Therefore, Paul presses the fact that lawsuits before pagan judges is unthinkable since believers have such a high charge in store for them. They will judge:-

a. World-system. This is the ordered kosmos system under the direction of Satan. Certainly it includes the sinners of the world, but the totality of the scheme organized against God

is in view.

b. Super-human creatures. This is a reference to angels. Since this word is anarthrous, it refers to a class of beings. The reference must be to fallen angels since those who are elect are never judged (cf. 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6).

3. VALUATION OF PROBLEMS

The argument of the apostle is that the saints have a high charge from the Lord. He seeks to awaken within the assembly their competency and dignity in the matter of resolving their problems. If, therefore, they are to judge the world-system and the order of created beings called angels, are they unable to care for the internal difficulties of their own assembly? What are these matters? They are generally referred to as a "case" (v. 1). But there are details. Mark them:-

a. Small matters. (v. 2). The thot behind this expression is an item of place rather than content. Paul asks, "Are you unworthy of the smallest tribunal, if you are worthy of the highest?" The considerations of any assembly are greatly inferior (tho to the persons involved they are of eternal consequence!) than the charge of judging angels and the world order!

b. Pattern of life. (vv. 3, 4) The Greek word used here refers to "living" and not to the actual source of life. It is used twice. It points to the fact that they were going to law over trifles. Solomon long ago said it was the little foxes that spoil the vines (Song of Solomon 2:15). It appears to be a malady of mankind to make mountains out of molehills and to major on minors!

NOTE: If one were to stop here and conclude with Paul the reasons for not getting involved in lawsuits with other Christians, he would have ample reasoning. But the matter goes deeper. Practice reckoned as being evil before God and men usually has some root difficulties. It was so in this case. To this the apostle now turns