Sue for your due? Or do for others as you?

1 Corinthians 6:1-8

“That’s not fair.”

“That isn’t right.”

“I just want what is coming to me.”

“I deserve more.”

“If you don’t make things right, I’m going to sue.”

Slide 1

All of you have heard comments like this and probably made comments like this in your life. It seems that believers in the Corinthian church were having some disputes and instead of working things out with each other, they were taking each other to court before the unbelieving magistrates. And the Apostle Paul clearly speaks out against it.

He writes in Chapter 6, beginning with verse 1:

Slide 2

6 When one of you has a dispute with another believer, how dare you file a lawsuit and ask a secular court to decide the matter instead of taking it to other believers! 2 Don’t you realize that someday we believers will judge the world? And since you are going to judge the world, can’t you decide even these little things among yourselves? 3 Don’t you realize that we will judge angels? So you should surely be able to resolve ordinary disputes in this life. 4 If you have legal disputes about such matters, why go to outside judges who are not respected by the church? 5 I am saying this to shame you. Isn’t there anyone in all the church who is wise enough to decide these issues? 6 But instead, one believer sues another—right in front of unbelievers!

1 Corinthians 6:1-6 NLT

What are some reasons that people sue?

1. To enforce a contract
2. To Recover Damages
3. To Protect their property
4. To dissolve a marriage or a partnership

Ultimately, lawsuits happen when someone has a perceived “injustice,” and they want the government judicial system to decide, and make a ruling, in favor or who is right.

And this is the job of our government’s justice system. They are to settle disputes by upholding justice.

This is a universal need in our world’s system. Someone must be the voice of justice in the world. You know “eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth,” fair price retribution for damages kind of justice. You want that you go to the court system. But remember Jesus said:

Slide 3

38 “You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ 39 But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. 40 If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. 41 If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles. 42 Give to those who ask, and don’t turn away from those who want to borrow.

Matthew 5:38-42 NLT

I have heard many a Christian nit-pick through this verse trying to decipher exactly how and when they need to turn the other cheek. This would be the same kind of person who is keeping count of how many times they have forgiven because once they are to 70x7 then they are in the clear.

It is not about exactness. Exacting justice is a worldly principle, it is a principle for unbelievers to keep some semblance of order. For believers Jesus’ words are about having an others focused attitude. And this others focused attitude should especially be evident in the area of forgiveness. Luke recorded this event which seems relevant…

Slide 4

36 Then one of the Pharisees invited Him to eat with him. He entered the Pharisee’s house and reclined at the table. 37 And a woman in the town who was a sinner found out that Jesus was reclining at the table in the Pharisee’s house. She brought an alabaster jar of fragrant oil 38 and stood behind Him at His feet, weeping, and began to wash His feet with her tears. She wiped His feet with the hair of her head, kissing them and anointing them with the fragrant oil.

39 When the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, “This man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what kind of woman this is who is touching Him—she’s a sinner!”

40 Jesus replied to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.”

“Teacher,” he said, “say it.”

41 “A creditor had two debtors. One owed 500 denarii, and the other 50. 42 Since they could not pay it back, he graciously forgave them both. So, which of them will love him more?”

43 Simon answered, “I suppose the one he forgave more.”

“You have judged correctly,” He told him. 44 Turning to the woman, He said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she, with her tears, has washed My feet and wiped them with her hair. 45 You gave Me no kiss, but she hasn’t stopped kissing My feet since I came in. 46 You didn’t anoint My head with olive oil, but she has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. 47 Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; that’s why she loved much. But the one who is forgiven little, loves little.” 48 Then He said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

Luke 7:36-48 NLT

Jesus’ words in Matthew 5 and the story in Luke are meant to help us have a completely different attitude about “getting our due.” Jesus’ words ring with the same tone that Paul’s words in verses seven and eight, when he writes:

Slide 5

7 Even to have such lawsuits with one another is a defeat for you. Why not just accept the injustice and leave it at that? Why not let yourselves be cheated? 8 Instead, you yourselves are the ones who do wrong and cheat even your fellow believers.

1 Corinthians 6:7-8 NLT

Have you ever noticed that in civil lawsuits, people aren’t really seeking justice? Most of the time they are seeking and exorbitant amount of money or property or at the very least I can say that most are seeking to get the most they can for themselves.

That is why the way Christians settle disputes should be different. Because our attitude is an attitude that says “It is truly more blessed to give than to receive.”

The person who has been wronged is truly blessed by giving mercy.

The person who did the wrong is truly blessed by bending over backwards and going over the top to right the wrong.

The courts systems aren’t needed for people with these kinds of attitudes.

Christians are the only ones who can truly help people navigate disputes through a gospel focused lens.

None of this is to say that you will never have to sue an unbeliever, and you may even have to go to a Christian lawyer to help settle civil disputes between your fellow Christians. But do not trust unbelievers with the responsibility to make decisions about your relationships with other believers. It is a terrible witness to non-believers, and like I said before, they will only be trying to exact justice in a worldly way.

I know this may seem like it isn’t a big deal, but it is significant enough that Paul goes on to say…

Slide 6

9 Don’t you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don’t fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, 10 or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people—none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God. 11 Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 NLT

Did you catch that?

He is talking about believers who take other believers before non-believing counsels. And he lumps them in with…Those who indulge in sexual sin, or worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, or are thieves, or greedy people…or cheats.

I have a short sermon today and I will finish with this…

When you believe you have been wronged and that justice must be served, consider first Jesus’ words…

38 “You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ 39 But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. 40 If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. 41 If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles. 42 Give to those who ask, and don’t turn away from those who want to borrow.

Matthew 5:38-42 NLT

Then consider Jesus’ actions that Paul describes in Romans:

Slide 7

24 Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. 25 For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, 26 for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he makes sinners right in his sight when they believe in Jesus.

Romans 3:24-26 NLT

And if you’re still clinging to your need for justice between you and another believer (and you haven’t been able to settle it with each other) go to another Christian to help you settle your grievance.

When Paul says, in 1 Corinthians 6:5:

“Isn’t there anyone in all the church who is wise enough to decide these issues?”

It is a rhetorical question, then, just like today, there are many wise Christians who can help you work through difficult issues.

If you are looking to get everything you can out of a bad situation and really make someone else pay, then an unbeliever is the place to go for counsel.

On the other hand, if your attitude is one of mercy, forgiveness, and grace because all the justice you deserve Jesus took on Himself…Then it makes sense that you would go to Christian counselor for wise decisions.