

1Co10 – Why Not Live Like Unbelievers? – 1 Corinthians 6:1-11
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Open your Bibles. God has a message for us today. It might feel tough, but it's a healing and exhorting message. Title of the message, "Why Not Live Like Unbelievers?" We're back in 1 Corinthians 6:1-11.

Let's say you have a favorite mechanic shop for your car. Man, you love these guys. You take your car there even when there's nothing wrong with it and you go out of your way to recommend this shop to everyone.

Then one day, you see the manager of your favorite shop getting work done on his own car – at a *different* mechanic shop, and you realize the guy on the "inside" of your favorite mechanic shop won't even bring his own car there.

How does that make you feel about "*his church*"...? I mean – about his *mechanic shop*?

Is that maybe how people outside the church feel about how we live inside the church? Isn't that a tragedy and doesn't that absolutely grieve God's heart? It *is* a tragedy and I believe it *does* grieve God's heart. And so, how we live *inside* the church is what Paul is addressing today in 1Corinthians Chapter 6.

Let's pray. *Lord, Jesus. We need this Word. We need to hear this Word. Your Word is living and active, it's powerful. It's sharper than a two edged sword. We give you the right to pierce us with it, Lord, that we would be transformed, that we would be changed by your living Word. That you would speak specifically, severally to each of us, and that we would be charged, that we would be exhorted that if we are believers, that we should not be living like unbelievers. Show us how it works out, we pray, in your name, Jesus, amen.*

Last week's message was titled, "Should The Church Address My Sin?" and Paul is continuing with this theme of the problem of *sin inside the church* here in chapter 6.

Should the Church address the Church on things the Church should know something about? *OR* should the Church have nothing to say (and no impact) on anyone's "personal choices" within the Church?

Should we as Christians, God's *community of saints* – his *body on the earth* –

should we get to do

WHATEVER we want

WHENEVER we want and
HOWEVER we want

with no input or influence from the church? Should believers be able to live just like unbelievers in the world? And if not, *why not?* That's the big question – IF NOT – WHY NOT?

If believers should *not live* like unbelievers, why not? That's the question I'd like to zero in on today.

And I believe Paul makes the answer to that question *pretty clear* in our text today. He begins with *how should believers handle trivial disputes with one another?*

But then (with seemingly a little “fire” in his words) Paul makes it perfectly clear at the close today, why we *should not* be *living like unbelievers*.

We start in 1 Corinthians 6:1 (maybe just as an example.)

1 Corinthians 6:1 (NLT)

1 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!

We'll see it in a minute; Paul calls these disputes “little things” in the NLT. The literal translations call these disputes “trivial cases” or “the smallest concerns.” Our courts today would call them “nuisance lawsuits.”

So let's not get caught up in what may be a legitimate legal issue. There *might be* legitimate legal issues but that's not what Paul is talking about here.

Paul is dealing with how “**Life As The Church**” should be lived, which is what our series is called and which is what Paul has been dealing with from the beginning.

And so, in 6:1 Paul says, ***how dare you take these “relatively trivial matters” and ask a WORLDLY court for a decision - instead of the church!***

And then in verse 2 Paul begins to answer our question of the day... If we should not be living like unbelievers, why not?

Here's one answer in 1 Corinthians 6:2.

1 Corinthians 6:2 (NLT)

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?

Don't you realize that someday we believers will judge the world? And **NOT ONLY the world**— But Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:3,

1 Corinthians 6:3 (NLT)

3 Don't you realize that we will judge angels? So you should surely be able to resolve ordinary disputes in this life.

Matthew 19, Judges 14, 2 Timothy 2 all say we will rule and reign alongside Jesus Christ in the Millennium and beyond and as interesting as that is, it's not Paul's point here. His point is – if we've been given the future positions of judging the world with Christ... shouldn't we really be able to handle these *trivial disputes* in a godly manner that doesn't bring reproach on Jesus?

And so Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:4,

1 Corinthians 6:4 (NLT)

4 If you have legal disputes about such matters (trivial matters), why go to outside judges who are not respected by the church?

I think in the broader context here, this could apply not only to the legal system of the land but also to other “judges” that we run to when we have a trivial dispute in the church. Most often our first step in our flesh when we get into a dispute... is to find someone who agrees with our position, someone who will “judge” in our favor and support us. And maybe sometimes to ensure we get their “support”... maybe sometimes we don't get around to telling that person quite the *entire* story.

You know we just emphasize the parts that help them “make a decision” to “join our side” and often that is the spark that begins the forest fire *inside* the church and begins the terrible witness *outside* the church.

And it is even worse when we go to an *unbeliever* to get a decision on our “case” regarding some trivial matter in the church. Because what Paul is really talking about is what impact these trivial disputes have on those who are *watching* from the outside. Just like the guy who sees the car shop manager taking his own car to a different car shop.

So in 1 Corinthians 6:5-6 Paul says,

1 Corinthians 6:5-6 (NLT)

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!

Again, the formal context is taking legal action against another believer but the broader context is how we handle trivial disputes in the church.

And Paul is saying – if you are living “Life As The Church” you must never handle your disputes in a way that would bring reproach on the name of Christ and would *destroy your witness* to the world around you.

Because when you reach this place of having others (especially unbelievers) judge your case against another believer, when you reach that place – you have ALREADY LOST the battle – you have already BEEN *defeated*.

1 Corinthians 6:7(a) (NLT)

7Even to have such lawsuits with one another is a defeat for you . . .(because of what it ‘says’ to those outside the church)

and then the sledge hammer of this entire subject falls.

1 Corinthians 6:7(b) (NLT)

7. . . Why not just accept the injustice and leave it at that? Why not let yourselves be cheated?

Have you ever heard someone in the church say,
“That’s *not fair*.”

“The way I was treated is *not fair*.”

And you may be absolutely right.

But the real question is

Do you want to act like the world in response? Or

Do you want to act like Jesus in response?

And then maybe we’d say *well, that question is not fair because I want the benefit of being a believer but I want to act like an unbeliever.*

I want the benefit of eternal life of a believer but I want to demand my rights just like the world does.

But Paul and Jesus and the entire New Testament all say just what 1 Corinthians 6:7 says.

1 Corinthians 6:7(b)(NLT)

7. . . Why not just accept the injustice and leave it at that? Why not let yourselves be cheated?

Why? For the cause of Christ. For the benefit of the Kingdom and for the possibility that someone may see a *Christ-like response* from you.

But too often, 1 Corinthians 6:8 says,

1 Corinthians 6:8 says (NLT)

8 Instead, you yourselves are the ones who do wrong and cheat even your fellow believers.

What do you mean – *I'm the one doing wrong?*

I'm just trying to get people to support my position. I'm just trying to get people to see things my way. And I'm just trying to get justice *just like Jesus did when he was on the earth...!!!*

Oh, no, that's right. Jesus did the opposite of *getting justice*. Jesus *gave his life* for those who have *wronged* him.

Jesus paid the full price for the sins of those who wronged him *while they were in the process of wronging him*.

If you say you are a Christ follower today and you still demand justice and fairness in your dealing with other people I would say you might still have a lot to learn about Jesus. I am not saying you're not a Christian. I'm just saying the Lord might have more of your old sin nature to refine out of you.

When our old life *died with Christ* (Galatians 2:20) and our new life was *joined to Christ* (Romans 6) we gave up the right to demand to be treated "fairly."

Paul is *still driving home* the answer to the question *Why shouldn't we live like unbelievers?* And starting in verse 9 he takes it up a notch – or ten!!!

He's still comparing
How the *righteous are to live* with
How the *unrighteous live*.

1 Corinthians 6:9(a) (NLT)

***9 Don't you realize that those who do wrong (literally the unrighteous) will not inherit the Kingdom of God?* . . .**

Those whose lives are characterized by willful, unrighteous living choosing to embrace sin and ignore the conviction of God ***they will not inherit the Kingdom of God.***

This is a very direct and straight forward verse because God knows that sin is deceptive. That's why the New Testament says over and over ***DO NOT Be Deceived – By Sin, or your Flesh, or the World***

Do not fool YOURSELVES into thinking that God is OKAY with *his Church– living like unbelievers*

1 Corinthians 6:9(b)-10 (NLT)

9 . . . Don't fool yourselves(other translations say “stop being deceived”– or “stop deceiving yourself”). ***Those who indulge***(NLT adds ‘indulge’ to express the active choice of living) ***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*** (‘slanderer’ – verbally damaging), ***or cheat people*** (swindler) —***none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God.***

What is God saying?

He is saying if you are *choosing* to live this way you should be concerned because God's people do not choose to live this way because this is not the life that represents the radical, transforming *power* of Jesus Christ.

Now, please hear me, if you are struggling against sin, if you are in the battle against some sin *THAT* is NOT what this verse is talking about. This verse is referring to people who are actively choosing to live this way, with no conviction from God.

And Paul is saying if a believer is living that way, they are living like someone who is NOT going to inherit the Kingdom of God and *that is a good reason to not live like an unbeliever.*

But here is the good news – here is the gospel.

1 Corinthians 6:11 (NLT)

11 Some of you were once like that (some of you actively lived like that). ***But you were cleansed*** (this GREEK word implies you had a ROLE in this 1st step, to be cleansed); ***you were made holy*** (this word is Passive Voice, meaning GOD did this); ***you were made right with God*** (Justified – again in Passive Voice – God did this) – (and so, what was your role that started it all?)(this process started) ***by*** (you) ***calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.***

You called on his name for salvation and the process began. You were positionally made *holy* and you were positionally made *right with God*.

And today if you will call on the name of the Lord Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit you will be cleansed – you will be made holy – you will be made right with God.

That is the good news – that is the gospel message!

And how many of you know that we must *continue* to call on the name of the Lord Jesus and *continue* to be *empowered by the Holy Spirit* in order to be able to walk (in a practical sense) in the new life that God freely gave us when we were saved?

Again, 1 Corinthians 6:11.

1 Corinthians 6:11 (NLT)

11 Some of you were once like that* (living like the worst unbelieving sinner). ***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.**

Is that reason enough to NOT live like an unbeliever?

You were cleansed of your sin by the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and then he made you right with God and all you had to do was call on the mighty to save – the name of Jesus Christ. And by the power of his Holy Spirit *residing in you* he is accomplishing supernatural, eternal miracles of transformation in you EVERY DAY.

Is that reason enough to NOT live like an unbeliever?

Paul is saying to the Church in Corinth and to us *we cannot live like unbelievers and expect God to treat us like believers*.

Do we think we can live just like the unbelieving world and expect the POWER of God to be transforming our lives? Do we think our lives can look just like an unbeliever's life and still have God use us as a witness to a lost and dying world?

The Bible clearly says NO – we cannot think that.

We have been redeemed – *bought with a price* by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. We are the living body of Jesus Christ on this earth. He lives IN us, and THROUGH us to draw the world to himself. We are the living temple. The place where the Glory of God resides on earth. We are his witnesses. We shine the light – of his transforming power. THAT is WHO we are and THAT is WHAT we are!

And so, depending on the full power of the Holy Spirit within us, we should live like WHO we are and we should live like WHAT we ARE so that the world can see Jesus – in us. So that our lives can be a witness to draw the world TO Jesus so that *they* can call on his name and be saved.

Let's pray. *Lord Jesus, we're just undone. We're undone when we recognize how frail we are and how much we have failed! We recognize, Lord, how often we've lived as unbelievers. We're exhorted, we're convicted, we're afraid. We desire to cling to you, Jesus, to call on your name, to be empowered by your Spirit, to be your witnesses, to be transformed, to allow people around us to see the miraculous, supernatural power of your Holy Spirit in our lives. And we recognize, Lord, that if we're living like unbelievers that can never happen. And we're afraid. We're afraid that we're so easily self deceived. Make us right before you, Lord. Make us right before you in all our ways including our trivial disputes in church. Help us to live like believers, that we would experience your power and be used by you to display your power to those around us. Fill us with your Spirit to this end, Lord.*

If you're here today and you've never actually called out to Jesus – man, do it now! Do it now. Don't wait for the soft cuddly, "Charmin" sermon, that's soft and cuddly. Look at this Word and say,

"Jesus, I need to be cleansed. I need to be made holy. I need to be made right with you. Fill me with your Spirit! Come into my life and fill me with your Spirit, Lord, that I may walk in power – in transformation power. That the people around me would see you in me, that my life would be different, Lord. That I would have the power to follow you, to serve you, to reflect your glory. Please save me and save me from living like an unbeliever. Thank you Jesus. Thank you Lord.

Fill us with your Holy Spirit, Lord. Light us on fire. Cause us to burn brightly in a dark world for your glory, Jesus, in your name, Jesus. In your name Jesus, we pray, amen.