

93. A Christian Should Not Go to Law with His Brother.

Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust and not before the saints? 1 Cor. 6, 1.

May a Christian make use of the civil courts in his own behalf? May a congregation go to law? The Scripture-passage which comes into consideration here is 1 Cor. 6, 1-7: "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life! If, then, ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the Church. I speak to your shame. Is it so that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now, therefore, there is utterly a fault among you because ye go to law one with another." This passage, without any limitation, forbids a Christian to go to law with his brother.

If a Christian has aught against his brother, he should settle the difference in the congregation, by way of brotherly admonition, according to Matt. 18. Do you say, "Yes, we Christians can judge spiritual and eternal things, but not temporal things"? I say, "Much more those things which pertain to this life." For the temporal things are much less important than the eternal things. And Christians do have an aptitude to judge what is meet and right and according to Christian charity and brotherly love in temporal things. It, therefore, reflects the greatest shame upon Christians if they ask unbelievers and worldlings to judge their little temporal quarrels. But if a man who has wronged you is no longer a brother, then you may call upon the civil government for help against the offender, since it is instituted by God to protect its citizens against injury in order that they may lead a quiet and peaceable life.

Prayer.

Grant, O Lord God, that I may love my neighbor and show him deeds of kindness, love, and mercy with an honest heart. Thou art a God of peace, and it is Thy wish that all Christians should live peacefully and harmoniously. And even if they think they are right, they should rather suffer wrong than do wrong; they should rather relinquish their rights and live a peaceable life in all godliness and honesty than fuss and quarrel that Thou, O holy and faithful God, mayest be extolled and praised by us now and forevermore. Amen.

O let me be with all
In peace and friendship living,
As far as Christians may;
And if Thou aught art giving
Of wealth and honors fair,
O this refuse me not,
That naught be mingled there
Of goods unjustly got.

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