

Dr. Gary Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Lecture 16, Paul's Response to Oral Reports, 1 Corinthians 6:1-6

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This is Dr. Gary Meadors in his teaching on the book of 1 Corinthians. This is session 16, Paul's Response to Oral Reports, 1 Corinthians 6:1-6.

Well, we continue to march on in our study of the book of 1 Corinthians. Today, we're doing chapter 6. Chapters 5 and 6, as you already know, are a unit after 5.1 concerning reports that Paul had received, the oral reports.

We last looked at chapter 5 in the question of incest. This time, we're going to look at this unrighteous litigation, as I've put it, as well as a continuing problem with sexual issues. Paul responds to the report concerning what I call unrighteous litigation in chapter 6. There's a journal article by Deming that argues that chapters 5 and 6 are a literary unit and that they're framed around a legal struggle among the Corinthians over the sexual misconduct that's mentioned in 5.1. Deming sees the context of chapter 6 with the court issue as being a continuation of what happened in 5.1. That's one scenario as to how this may have played out.

It's almost impossible to require that, but that is an option and well worth looking at. The basic details and the moral teachings that are involved in the chapter are generally the same. We'll see just a little more of the Roman banquet issue coming into this chapter in chapter 6 with the work of Bruce Winter.

Winter's chapters in his volume on After Paul Left Corinth focuses on a larger historical reconstruction than just linking everything to 1 Corinthians 5.1. If we read this as Winter has read it and how it's been traditionally read and not take 5.1 as setting the specific context for both chapters, then we do not have an identification of what the court issue was in chapter 6. Now, the court issue in chapter 6 would certainly be one of a civil issue. I think that will become clear as we move through it, whereas in chapter 5, that could be a criminal issue as far as the issues that the Roman courts dealt with at various levels of criminal activity and of civil activity. So, there's a lot to be looked at in terms of trying to require the specificity that Deming does or to view it in a little more general way that we have this person in chapter 5 being dealt with without bringing in how the Roman courts would have dealt with him and then in chapter 6 another issue with the courts. So, there are a couple of different ways to look at it, and I'm probably going to look at it a little less like Deming and a little more in the general way.

How could Paul be so negative about judges and courts in 1 Corinthians 6:1-11 and yet in Romans 13:1-7 he's very supportive of courts and government and of Christians being subject to the powers? Well, one good answer, I think, is that Romans is addressing the government's role in controlling criminal violations while 1 Corinthians is reflecting more on civil court. In 6:2 it talks about judging trivial cases, trivial being a term that could refer to the level of the issue being on a localized basis rather than being on a national criminal law basis. Civil courts were more locally controlled with all of the local politics and corruption that came with that territory.

In the civil domain, the methodology of the legal process was called vicious. Now, that seems negative. That may be more of a description of how it ended up than it was the description of the people who controlled those courts. To prevail in the civil court, you had to assault the opponent's character.

That may have happened in the criminal as well but it particularly was the mode of operation at the civil level. This came to be known as vexatious litigation, and that became a very important phrase when we think about the Roman courts. Now, remember, we're in a culture of honor and shame.

We're in a culture of a Roman colony where some people have a lot of status and a lot of honor, and the worst thing that can happen to a person of status with honor is to be shamed. Then we have this kind of oral lawyers with oratory in courts trying to influence opinions about individuals, and part of that influence was very negative in terms of tearing down their character and their behavior to win another person's position. In these civil courts, it was mainly people of status who were vying with each other because a person who did not have a certain level of status had no right to take someone of status to court.

It was very structured in that society. They didn't have that kind of power. On the other hand, a person of status could drag a person of non-status into the court, and you have a more volatile situation and a very serious situation, particularly if the person without status tries to fight that person and perhaps should lose that.

They would lose more than what they don't have, meaning status, but could lose property and perhaps even life under certain circumstances. I've given you a few bullet points here to unpack some of this. Civil courts deal with a variety of issues.

Legal possession of something could be property or some item, breach of contract, damages, everything from someone getting gored by your ox to perhaps your property doing something to someone else's, like in a flood. Fraud, personal injury. The civil court seemingly dealt with issues in regard to disputes of various kinds that weren't classified as criminal disputes.

Organizations, the *ecclesiae*, that is, the various guilds, which were called *ecclesiae*, were called assemblies. They would perhaps sometimes vie with each other and have to be taken care of in a civil way. The civil courts were more local.

Criminal courts, on the other hand, in Roman Corinth, dealt with more serious offenses, high treason against the empire, embezzlement of state property, bribery in terms of elections, extortion of others in the provinces, murder by violence or poisoning, endangering public security, in other words, undermining the safety of the city, forgery of wills, coins, counterfeiting, violent offenses, adultery and seduction of reputable unmarried women. Adultery would be having illicit sex with another legal wife of someone else in the Roman setting or the seduction of a woman of status or a family of status and ruining her reputation. So, that was viewed as criminal.

In fact, during the first century, Rome had a very, very severe view against the issue of adultery, even to the point of capital punishment in severe cases. Judges and juries in the civil courts are another issue as well. Think about this.

Roman litigation in civil courts favored those of status. It favored the elite. You can imagine a civil court is inside the city.

The city is structured according to status. Who's going to run this? We feel that way many times in each of our cultures, whether it's the American culture or another culture. For example, in America, money buys defense, whether you're dealing with civil issues or criminal issues.

It seems that buying the experts and buying the lawyers if you are not a person of means and you get a public defendant is not equal justice for all. I think that's very clear within our culture. Yet at the same time, even in civil courts, whether it's anything from a car accident to the violation of your property in some way, maybe someone has transgressed the boundaries of your property and built something on it, and now you've got to deal with that.

You've got judges who are local. You've got juries who are local. Now, you can imagine in a status culture, where the jurors are going to come from. It was well known that nobody disputes the fact that there was a lot of graft in the ancient world.

Roman litigation and civil courts favored those of status. They were sort of given the benefit of the doubt. The elite class, because of their being in the elite class, had the honor, and you had to remove it to be able to convict them.

Judges were elected only from the elite class and held sway over those of lesser status. It's a stacked deck, as you can see. Jurors were appointed in relation to their

financial status and were intimidated by persons of status from whom they probably profited, especially those who were their benefactors.

Furthermore, the courts protected those of status from being shamed. To be shamed was the worst thing that could happen. It undermines their status within the culture.

Lawsuits could not be initiated by persons of lower status to another person. It only came from the top down. It didn't come from the bottom up.

The bottom had no power. Lawsuits were basically conducted among persons who were social equals in one way or another, and this could get very vicious because to win, you had to dishonor the other person, the very fact that they were there. Judges and jurors were often corrupt.

Winter provides us with a number of original source citations from which that can be observed, and I'm not going to reiterate that here. Corruption is a part of the human condition, isn't it? Then and now. Furthermore, in the civil domain, the methodology of the legal process was vicious.

Lawyers who were orators and were experts of persuasion, as we've seen from some other settings, were particularly trained in oratory, and to prevail, you had to assault the opponent's character and ethics. This came to be known as vexatious litigation. Winning often meant causing shame and loss of dignity for the plaintiff, and that was extremely serious business.

You can see some details of these courts in the bibliography at the top of page 76. We are in note pack number nine for chapter six, as you would already know. Reflect further on Winter's portrayal of litigation in a Roman setting.

Now, as we're talking about this, you should, in your own mind, be asking how a Roman colony in the first century and its court, the civil court system, compare to my situation and civil courts in my setting and ask yourself where it's apple to apple and apple to an orange. It's not the same. No courts are the same as we look through certain levels of history.

This is a little bit repetitive but listen to these bullet points on page 76. Winter notes how Roman litigation favored those of status. Judges were elected only from that class.

They held sway over those of lesser status. Jurors were appointed in relation to their financial status and were intimidated by persons of status. So, the whole thing is rigged against you if you have no power.

The courts also protected those of status from being shamed by a person of less status. Lawsuits could be initiated but could not be initiated by persons of lower status. So, if you're taken advantage of and you have no status, forget it.

You have no recourse. Furthermore, judges and jurors were often corrupt, and this was an open issue. It was not something that people didn't realize.

Maybe they sort of acted like they were ignoring it. Once again, Winter gives you a number of citations of abuse, and the writers of that era complaining about the judges and jurors seem to have no ethical norms, but money spoke, and even the extension of various levels of status to them spoke. Here are some illustrations of that in the middle of page 76.

A surviving papyrus from Nero's reign, which is about 54 to 67, cites a case where prosecution was impossible because a person of status had a track record of winning cases by favorable impartial judges. In other words, in that illustration, there's the complaint that there's no use, even for a person of status, to go to court against a certain individual because you knew as soon as you thought about it, you'd lose because the deck was so stacked against you. Seneca, a writer of the period, cites the case of a man of status taunting a lower-status person to sue him, and the poor man knew that it was useless.

Go ahead, sue me. We've heard this in various cultural settings. I've got more money.

I've got more status. You're not going to win. You're just going to get hurt, so suck it up and go away.

Winter cites three witnesses in regard to the Corinthian courts. Diakrisostom records, this is about 89 to 96, which is a little late, that there were in Corinth lawyers innumerable, twisting judgments. Now, that's a few decades removed from the time that we're talking about, but things move slowly in the ancient world, so it's not all that far removed from the same kind of reality.

A decade later, Favorinus, I may be saying that incorrectly, but you can give it your shot at it, refers to the unjust treatment that he had received at the hands of leading Corinthian citizens. He contrasts that with the actions of their forefathers in pre-Roman days, who were themselves so-called lovers of justice and showed to be preeminent among the Greeks for cultivating justice, but the Corinthians were not. Those in Roman Corinth were obviously not.

Later in the second century, Apuleius invades the Corinthians, alleging that nowadays, all juries sell their judgments for money, almost throwing up their hands and saying, what's the use? Money wins. Well, you know, even though this is a couple of thousand years ago, things don't change a whole lot, do they? Our world,

and the world in which we live, since Adam and Eve, has been infected by sin, which means power struggles, violence, status, and unfairness. There is no justice in this world at the end of the day.

There's only legal processing. And so, if you're looking for justice, it's something that you will seldom find. The Christian realizes this, and Paul deals with it with these Christians because they are trying to use their worldly apparatus to achieve something that is impossible.

The next bullet point is repetitive; furthermore, in the civil domain, the methodology of the legal process was vicious. To prevail, you had to assault the opponent's character. This came to be known as vexatious litigation.

Winning often means causing shame and loss of dignity. So, at the end of the day, Corinthian Christians of status may have been using the public courts and or the principles of Roman vexatious litigation to adjudicate their dealings with one another in the Christian community. See, we don't know everything we'd like to know, but we can exercise a little imagination based on historical reconstruction that within that Corinthian church, there were going to be problems.

Someone bought something, and it failed. Maybe they bought an ox from a person of status, and they got home, and the ox died. They go back and say, your ox died.

A person of status says, well, it's not my problem; it's your problem. And so, what are you going to do? And so, you've got the same kind of situation that we all face in our own cultures: when wrong is done, how is it negotiated out? It's very difficult when you're dealing with people who have power and people who don't. Dealing with each other internal to the church seemed to be happening in the same way that it was happening in pagan society.

How did the pagans operate? How was the church operating? So, when we read chapter 6, verses 1 through 11, and we see this litigation going on, at least we can understand a little bit of what it was like. It was a Roman court. It was, without doubt, a civil court, not a criminal court.

If it were a criminal court, it wouldn't be under the control of individuals, it would be under the control of the state. And so, here we have a group of new Christians who have formed themselves into communities, and when they became Christians, they didn't cease to be who they were within the Roman city. And now, issues that already exist or issues that arise are being dealt with not in new ways as Christians, asking questions such as, well, how do we as Christians deal with this? You see, they had no guidance.

What Paul was saying was the first thing they'd heard about what's right, what's wrong about all this. They just naturally continued to use the structures that they had to solve their problems without thinking. And Paul comes in and says, wait a minute, this doesn't square with how Christian ethics ought to operate.

Now, let's think about the text a little more on page 77. In verses 1 through 6, Paul points out the shame and incompatibility of pursuing litigation in the worldly courts.

Reading the 2011 NIV, if any one of you has a dispute with another, do you dare take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord's people? Or do you not know that the Lord's people would judge the world? And if you were to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Now, trivial doesn't mean they didn't mean something, but it probably is referring to the civil court question. Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more of the things of this life? Therefore, if you have disputes among such matters, about such matters, do not ask for a ruling from those whose way of life is scorned in the church. I say this to shame you.

Is it possible that there's nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? But instead, one brother takes another to court, and this is in front of unbelievers. And so, we've got at the bottom line a problem of apples and oranges. We've got courts ruled by the city, ruled by people who were not Christians, with certain structures that they've been using for decades.

And then we've got the Christians who now have to live with each other, and we've got disputes, and they're trying to solve them in the old manner. Now, this could be anything from two people of status having a problem with each other to a person of status taking advantage of other Christians. Maybe he wants some property adjacent to his.

So, he rigs up some dispute with that individual of less status, and pulls them into court to try to get an advantage to procuring that property. We don't know the specifics. We just can imagine all the sorts of things that could have been happening.

And now, we're seeing Paul address the Christians because it had become so common, and it would have to be relatively common for it to be a problem that would raise such a discussion. Now, once again, because of the unity, Deming has argued that 6:1 to 11 is actually a court case relating to 5:1 to 8. In other words, the fellow who was sleeping with his mother-in-law. He argues that some in the congregation, irate at the issue of incest, took the son or husband to civil court but lost the case.

You also see 6:12 to 20 referring to the event of chapter 5. Well, maybe, but if you understand Roman law, incest was not a civil issue. It was a criminal issue. And so, there are some things that speak against this, but that's what scholarship does.

People write articles. They propose ideas. Others read it and critique it, and it goes back and forth.

And then, after a long period of time, perhaps, it's either judged as being a good idea or not going to win. And this one has not exactly won, but it is certainly an interesting proposal. And remember this: even when you're reading material that may not win the day, you're going to learn something because the writer is dredging up historical and cultural information.

He's evaluating phrases of text that are important in the larger discussion. So, while an interesting scenario when reflecting on how to maintain the context that is Deming's article, Gannon asserts that this reconstruction fails for at least three reasons. Gannon is a writer in this particular domain, particularly in sexual issues.

He says, quote, while I find Deming's arguments intriguing, the notion that the lawsuit in chapter six one to eight has to do with the incestuous man fails on three counts. The first reason it fails. Who would Paul encourage the Corinthian believers to be wronged and defrauded, that is, to let the matter drop within the Christian community and not just in the courts? Paul himself has already judged the community to expel the incestuous man.

In other words, it seems a little redundant, and Paul has judged the man within the church. There doesn't seem to be a link between what Paul's saying in chapter five and what we're seeing in chapter six. It's a little hard to make the connection there.

If there were a connection, chapter six would have addressed it more specifically. Second, Paul's claim in 5:1 that the case of incest is a kind of sexual immorality found not even among the Gentiles would have been determined and would have been undermined, excuse me, if the courts had taken no action. Third, Paul refers to this lawsuit in question as an example of the least cases, the trivial cases.

Paul never treated chapter five as trivial at all. An everyday, ordinary matter is unlikely characteristic of the issue of incest in chapter five. So, there's just enough to say that what happened in five, while it was a sexual issue and may have some pieces in the latter part of chapter six, because these two chapters do go together, that the issue of the court is probably not dealing with that individual who was guilty of the incest, but it was something else not described to us.

In 6:12 to 20, Gannon does agree, and it seems logical to do so with Deming that it is a general reflection relating to the problems of sexuality and, therefore, could

include the problem that was in chapter five. In chapter six, in verse one, we read, dare any of you go before the unrighteous. Let me read the NIV.

If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly? That's an interesting translation. It is technically the term for the unrighteous, the unjust technically, for judgment instead of before the Lord's people. Well, what does unrighteous mean in this context? What does unjust mean? There are two possibilities.

It may mean before unbelievers, or it may mean not the individuals but the whole system. Is it the issue of unbelievers, or is it going to the unrighteous? That is the world's system, individual unit, community. Some view the unrighteous of 6:1 to be the same as the unbelievers of 6.6. Listen to 6.6. But instead, one brother takes another to court, and this in front of unbelievers.

Now, that sounds like it would relate to an individual. So, they say these are individuals. They do not see Paul making a moral judgment about the courts, per se, but merely that believers should deal with matters in-house.

Now, that's an interesting scenario if it refers to the fact that the courts are run by unbelievers. Now, if you bring that over by analogy to an American court system, if you've ever had the misfortune of dealing with courts, you will soon learn that judges and their instructions to juries, and most Americans have served on juries and have experienced this, that judgments are not made on the basis of your feelings. In fact, you are virtually threatened by the judge as he gives you the charge as a jury.

It's made on the points of law. In the American court system, the points of law are reasonable beyond a doubt. It's a very formal thing.

In fact, most of us are completely confused when we experience or observe issues that have been processed through the courts, and we wonder how could anybody come to that conclusion. Usually, it's a point of law that brought it to that point, and maybe even the judge and the jury might wish they could say something different, but they are restricted because it's a very strict thing. In fact, it's sort of like doing exegesis in the Bible. Exegesis is not a simple process; there are rules and regulations, and you can have certain things you can't have.

The same thing's true in court. Many times, I think, judges, and they will even say this, that they feel for the plaintiff, yet at the same time, the law requires. Most of us don't have a clue about law and legal processing, and as a result of that, we misunderstand what's going on.

So, when we go to court, nine times out of ten, more than likely, in any cultural setting, we're processing something before people who are not applying religious

standards are ethical standards to the issue. They're applying the dictates of law. Now, the Roman court, as we've already said, wasn't quite that clean, but I think, while there's certainly corruption at every level of human activity, and at least in some cultural settings that are controlled and have self-policed themselves, there's at least the rule of law.

Number two, there's the view of the individual. Then, others view, on page 77, near the bottom, others view Paul's reference to unrighteous as a judgment about the Roman judicial process, that he's not talking about just going before unbelievers, but he's talking about going to an unbelieving system, to a world system, and that's incongruent because the world can't make the kind of judgment about issues that the church makes because the church looks at things differently than the world looks at things. So, is it a judgment about individuals, or is it a judgment about the system? Winter argues that unrighteous is a valid description of the judges and the juries of adjudicated legal complaints.

It's the whole system. To me, that seems to make a little more sense, and it's not that the system would always have been wrong. Maybe you would get a decent judge from time to time.

Maybe you would get a decent jury just for the sake of argument, but the problem is that the standards by which they made judgments were not the standards of God and the Bible. We could take one ancient illustration of this, and that would be Lot. Lot sat in the gate of the city at Sodom.

That's an ancient Near Eastern phrase that means he was part of the political process. He was a judge in Sodom, and when you see how he deals with what he thought were strangers and visitors who turned out to be angels, he is trying to protect them because he knows the city. I like to think of Lot as a judge in the city of Sodom working for the Mafia and the Mafia controlled everything that he thought and did, and yet he had to make decisions in keeping with what the standards of Sodom were, the standards of the Mafia, but all the time he made those decisions, he felt horrible on the inside because he knew it was wrong, but he had no choice.

He was in the system, and when you're in the system, you're subject to the system, and as a result of that, Lot had a lot of trouble in his life internally to himself. As the narrative works out, it was a horrible life and the external problems that it created as well. So, more than likely, this thing of before unbelievers and before the unrighteous is talking about the entire setting of getting justice in a court that is run by world views that are contrary to this Judeo-Christian way of thinking.

You just can't get justice there. You might as well forget it, and so that's most likely what it was, but you see, it is an interpretive issue. You have those two options.

Six one, Paul's use of the term to the unrighteous, it's from Dikaios, which is the idea of unjust or ungodly, is probably more than just saying that the civil judges were unbelievers, which they may well have been. He indicates the judicial process they represent and notes that they are outside the realm of the righteous. They were outsiders, and insiders were trying to get a judgment for some issue that should be adjudicated inside, not outside.

Winter and others, for references to primary sources that demean the legal culture of their time, there's no lack of writers, Roman writers of the period, talking about how horrible their civil courts were. So, there was no way to get justice there. So, dare you go before the unrighteous? That is, why do you use a system to seek justice that can't provide it? You'd better off using your own system and living with it, even if it's not perfect.

In 6:2, he talks about trivial cases. The ESV translates it that way. The new international version, 2011, says judge, it uses trivial cases as well to run those words.

These were small claims courts, if you please, even though they could be very serious to an individual. So, they were civil, nonetheless. Top of page 78.

Western categories, excuse me, to view these as a small claims kind of court, small claims meaning even more trivial. Western categories into ancient culture. In other words, when we talk about small claims, we talk about going in and talking to a judge, even without a lawyer.

Some of these almost ludicrous programs on TV are about Judge Judy and Judge so-and-so, which is a small claims court where you go in without a lawyer to try to save money. That's not what this is. This is not a small claims court in that sense, but it is a civil claim, which may not be so trivial.

Six two is more likely a reference to vexatious litigation, which was more a part of civil court than the serious level of criminal court. We've rung that bell a few times, and it ought to be getting through. This was the use of courts to address enmity between parties and to deal with problems between people.

A criminal court is not interested in dealing with problems between people. A criminal court deals with criminal violations. The civil courts deal with problems between people.

I live in a community that's dealing with adjacent land and trying to rezone it. And for the space of a year, I attended meetings. The last of the series of meetings was in the courthouse, where the lawyers from both sides sat down and discussed the issues surrounding the rezoning.

I have to tell you that as I listened to those lawyers' exegete historical documents and legal documents, by analogy, I thought I was listening to scholars arguing over phrases in the exegesis of the biblical text. It was working the same way. What did the original, the framers of this document, mean when they said such and such? What does this language mean in this particular context? It doesn't mean what you say it means, but it means this.

I watched that for hours. It was a fascinating insight into how lawyers were operating outside of the criminal court in disputes over zoning questions and the use of land and things like drainage and all other kinds of issues. It was fascinating.

I think it's also quite serious and a lot of emotions. There were a lot of different people in the room for these two sides. I think it's at least a little bit analogous to what's going on here.

6-2 is more likely a reference to that civil court. This was the use of courts to address enmity between parties. It was the use of courts to address personal problems in the society.

Now you can see how status could come in because it's not a criminal law. It's a civil law. So, if you've got disputes over boundaries, disputes over the use of land, disputes over ownership of this or that, you can see how a person of status might have an edge over a person of less status besides the fact that they could garner lawyers as it were to represent them. So, terms like strife, jealousy, these are terms that we're finding in this context, carnality, envy fall into judges and juries dealing with personal battles, political slander, leadership battles, and we've seen that status control, power struggles within groups were being played out in the court.

Now, I wish we knew more about the specifics. It's convenient to follow Deming and restrict it to that individual, but I just don't think that we're talking about apples to apples here between 5 and 6 in this regard. And so, we can't take that convenient round, but there were some serious power struggles going on, and people of status liked to have their way, so they were dragging it into the social structure settings of court.

Notice Winner's statement in 78, the civil courts by convention provided another appropriate arena to conduct a power struggle within the church as it would be in any association. Guilds who were competing with other guilds may have ended up in these courts. Guild against guild, or maybe there was a power struggle within a guild.

Maybe the silversmiths were arguing with each other over territory, and they would go into court against each other. This is the kind of setting we're talking about. The

same struggle had moved from the meetings of the Christian community to a session of civil court.

Now, this isn't too far removed from reality. Even as I sit here today, I know of a major denomination in the United States that is disintegrating over social issues, and every day, churches from that denomination are going to court against their denomination in terms of property and finances. The denomination tied up a lot of these churches with a clause that makes the property of that church, even its bank accounts, the property of the denomination, not the property of that local church.

And a lot of these major churches that do not want to go the way the major denomination is going have discovered that they don't have any recourse. They actually have to buy back the property they already paid for as a congregation and give payment to the overarching denomination that had that legal clause to get out from underneath that denomination and do what their conscience calls them to do in terms of ministry. This has happened more than once in the United States with major denominations where property is tied up at the national level, not just at the local level.

It's a struggle, and there are probably numerous kinds of struggles. If we research more, we probably could surface some, but the fact is that it's just like life. The problems they had we have today, they had the same problems back then.

And so, they were trying to get these things adjudicated outside of their new community, outside of their guild called the church. These kinds of proceedings with the allowable judicial process, which approached slandering each other in court, created a lot of personal resentment, the loss of dignity for the individual who lost, and the ramifications for that within the total community. I don't think we have to apply a lot of imagination to understand how that could happen and what it means in the aftermath.

6.4 is another verse, middle of page 78. Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, do you ask for a ruling from those whose way of life is scorned in the church? I say this to shame you. Now, notice that was 5a, shame you.

Notice how Paul reverses the logic of honor and shame to the Corinthians. 6.4 is tricky to translate. You have a participle, as maybe you understand these grammatical labels or don't, don't worry about it.

BDAG, that is an abbreviation for Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, which is a Greek lexicon, sees the term that's used as despised or of no account. 7.4 illustrates how something as seemingly simple as punctuation can be an issue of validation. The second clause, the verb, is a form that overlaps in how you parse it.

So, it could be one of two things. It could either be an assertion, an assertion in Greek is known as the indicative mood, or it could be an imperative, which means it's a command. So, is it indicative, or is it imperative? Let's see how this forms out here.

Look at the bullet points. In the ASV and the ESV, it's an assertion in the form of a question. I should have given you the entire chart, and it would have been easier to see.

In other versions, there is an exclamation you are appointing. In other words, it's almost like sarcasm. So, there are issues about how we even read this text and how it's put together.

Some see it as an exclamation where the verb would be an imperative. The original NIV had it as an imperative. The 2011 in verse 5, I say this to shame you, is it possible, notice it used the question, is it possible, which would be the first of our bullet points, that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge, rather than the third point, which is what the original NIV used.

I'm discovering, because I'm kind of going through this fresh, because when the last time I taught First Corinthians, I used the original NIV, and oftentimes I would find myself disagreeing with that translation. But the 2011 revision, I end up finding myself more in agreement with. So, I'm having a little yin-yang sometimes, and I need to recreate charts to create more charts because the reading and its interpretation have been slanted because in the revision of a certain English version, it has been changed.

Taking the verb as an indicative or an interrogative, that is, as a question, a question is sort of like an assertion but put into the question form. The ESV does it that way. The RSV, the NRSV, since I have the NRSV here, let me just read 6.4 to you from the RSV, so you can hear it.

I need my glasses for this print, 6:4. If you have ordinary cases, then do you appoint those who have no standing in the church as judges? It uses the question, as we've talked about, in the form of a question but sees it as an indicative verb, which is an assertion. It puts it in question form, but it's still an assertion. It just uses the rhetorical nature of a question.

We have these versions: the NRSV, the NASB, and the United Bible Society's four. I don't have the newest one in front of me right here, and I can't reach for it right now. As you look at versions, once again, we're right back to the question of punctuation.

Is there a question? Is there not a question? Here we have a verb that can be parsed out in two different ways by the same form. This happens in Greek quite a bit, and that means you have to make a contextual judgment, which isn't. Is it this way, or is

it that way? The ESV, so if you have cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church? Here's a play.

See, Paul's kind of picking up on this status thing and turning it back to them. Okay, you're a church. You're an ecclesia.

You are a guild in that sense, and yet you have status internal to your guild, and you have a continuity of judgments within your guild, but you're going to go out to somebody who has no status in your guild and get a judgment from them. That seems to be contradictory. In these translations, the ESV, interestingly, is more dynamic than the NIV.

If you read those two, that's the old NIV. Interestingly, the ESV's interpretive translation matches Winter's analysis. It would seem that the reference to those of no account in the Christian meeting was to the outsider, the judge, and the jury who presided over civil actions.

They had no status in the Christian family. They weren't part of the Christian family. They were not under that umbrella, even though they may have been Christians who were all too conscious of the importance and the deference that should be given to their civil status as annually elected magistrates and jurors.

When I read these to you, it gets a little bit discombobulated because of the reading. Just take a moment, read that over, and think through it, and I'm sure that it will clarify itself to you. My reading isn't so hot.

You can also take the verb as an imperative. The King James Version, the original NIV, has this to some extent, Chrysostom, Augustine, and many modern writers, Garland included. The NIV said, therefore, if you, this is the original NIV, have disputes about such matters, appoint judges among yourselves.

Okay, see the difference? That's an imperative. That's a command. Let's go back for a second to the ESV.

Why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church? That's a question. It's saying you're doing something wrong, but if you read it as an imperative, appoint as judges, even men of little account in the church. Now, that becomes another issue.

In fact, it takes it to another level. It's imperative with sarcasm. In other words, it's Paul just kind of railing against them and their lack of ability to make judgments, and I'll talk a little more about that in a second.

The phrase men of little account in the NIV means those of low social status. It's not a term of morality, a little account. It's a term of status.

It probably implies the undermining of using courts to advance status. I am drawn to the sarcasm since it fits the context in the Pauline style. In other words, Paul is basically saying you're going to go out to a court that doesn't understand you as people.

Now, maybe they understand your complaint with each other because it's probably a common complaint that happens among people, but they're not going to take into consideration that you're now brothers and you're sisters, and you go out there. Paul says, wait a minute, why don't you, instead of going to the courts and getting the judgment, you'd be better off grabbing some people out of your congregation who do not have status and letting them make the judgment about you. See the sarcasm? You're better off taking a low-status judgment than going to a high status court.

So, he's being very, very sarcastic about their life setting. Now, I don't know about you, but as I think through this and work through this, I realize that this isn't the way American courts operate. Now, there are a lot of problems with any court, America, first of all, perhaps, but it's not like Roman Corinth.

So, you cannot take 1 Corinthians 6 as a blanket statement about what you do as an American Christian in relation to courts. There are issues in here you're going to have to account for. But it is not a blanket statement about courts in any given culture outside of what was happening in that immediate first century Roman Corinth and the issues of the Roman court for civil matters.

It's completely different and you just can't ignore that and bring it over and demand that we meet the same standards because it's not the same. There are different issues involved. In fact, in American culture, you don't have a choice, and the reason you don't is that you have insurance companies.

I lived in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, for a while, and one day, we were in the house, and all of a sudden, there was a loud knock on the door, there was a policeman at the door, and he told us to get out of the house. Well, he'd been driving on a road that overlooked the top of our house, and he saw black smoke coming out of the gables on the end of our home. What had happened was that an exhaust fan had caught on fire, and the electrical pieces in it created a horrible stench and black smoke, but we didn't know it because it was going out and up.

So, we got out of the house. The policeman actually went up on our roof. I killed the power.

He pulled the thing out, and then the fire department was there and took care of it. And so, I called my insurance company and told them about the fire, and they told me, well, we'll take care of it, and we'll let you know what happens. And I said, well, what do you mean? They said, well, they discerned that Sears had manufactured the fan that had been installed in our attic.

My insurance company was going to go after Sears to pay for the, for this event, for the fan, for the damage and my insurance deductible. So, I went ahead, they told me to go ahead and get it repaired. So, I did.

And some months later, when they paid me, they even gave my deductible back and said that Sears took responsibility for this. You see, what happened is the insurance lawyers, and the Sears lawyers worked it out. I had no choice.

They didn't say, well, do you want to go to court for this to get these damages paid for? You don't have a choice. Insurance companies make that automatically. They do it every day.

In auto accidents, particularly, there's a lot that goes on that you don't have a clue about. In workplace accidents, on and on it goes. Almost every insurance company in the American culture has a battery of lawyers to try to get out of paying anything by going after somebody else.

And they do it without your permission. They do it, and you don't even know what's going on half the time. And then, at the end of the day, they send you a letter and tell you that you either owe or you don't owe.

And that's the way it goes. So, the American legal system is not to be compared to the Roman Corinth at any imaginable level. And that may be true for your legal system, wherever you are in the world.

And you may even be in something worse than Corinth. There may be someone who's auditing this lecture in a country where you do not have freedom. You do not have a choice.

You may be put down more than you would have been if you were in Roman Corinth. You suffer more as a result of it. And so, God has you in a certain place at a certain time, and each of us has to adjust and live with the issues we deal with.

Paul's statement in 6.5 should ring in your ears. I say this to your shame. If you're beginning to get the issue of Corinth, Corinth was a culture of honor and shame on the basis of status.

And when Paul says, I say this to your shame, they had lost dignity. In their culture, to lose dignity was everything. Well, they ought to feel the pain of that in terms of their Christian culture.

I say this to your shame has deep cultural ramifications. Those who were using Roman, excuse me, worldly means to deal with their personal problems were the ones who lost dignity. In a culture of shame, this is a major judgmental statement.

I have a little statement on shame here in 6:5. The noun in 6:5, I've given you the Greek word in trope, means shame or humiliation. It only occurs here and in 1 Corinthians 15:34. In extra biblical literature, the term can be used for the opposite, meaning respect or regard depends on the context. Its verb form is usually slightly more in the New Testament, and it means shame.

There are a few more verbs, but the noun only occurs here. Its semantic field, however, is much larger. By the way, if you're a Greek student, there you have, I'm sure you're aware of, maybe you see it on my shelf here.

This is the standard Greek lexicon. It's called BDAG, Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich. It used to be Bauer's lexicon, then Arndt and Gingrich revised it.

And it was called BAG, Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich. Danker revised it a couple of times and finally decided that since he had revised it so much, his name ought to go first. So, it's DBAG, Danker, Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich.

And this is your standard lexicon. It's an indispensable tool for translating and exegeting the New Testament. But there's another lexicon called a Greek-English lexicon.

This is put out by the American Bible Society and it's by Low and Nida, whose name is in that second bullet point. This lexicon is not like the other one. The other one is like any alphabetical dictionary; it treats words and their meanings and their parsings.

This has none of that. This is a semantic field lexicon. It's looking at the context where the words are used and asking you what they mean.

Loa Nida looks at the semantic field of shame and sees it as much larger. You'd have to go read the entry that I've given you there to get the point. A culture of shame cannot simply be unpacked by words; it requires a conceptual explanation.

In our Christian cultures, for example, what would be something that would shame us with internal to our church? Well, say you fall asleep in church, and you start having a dream. And in your dream, you become exceedingly angry. And not even knowing it because you're asleep, you start talking out loud.

There's a shocker. And you start cursing a blue streak using God's name in vain out loud in the middle of the congregation on Sunday morning. And you wake up and everybody is looking at you.

And your wife pokes you and says, Honey, you were dreaming, and you started cussing. What do you feel? Well, probably you feel some shame. Oh, geez.

Even if you're not a person who does that. I had a revered professor, one of the most humble people I ever knew. He went into the hospital.

He was put on meds for a very, very serious medical problem. Then, the story started coming out about him cursing up a blue streak. No one had ever heard him say anything like that.

So, it might not even be a deserved shame. You were asleep. In that sense, we will say you're not responsible.

But the fact is, it happened, and you feel that shame. Maybe you gossiped about someone. And even when you gossiped, you thought to yourself, I shouldn't be saying this.

And then you are publicly called on the carpet in some setting about what you said. Now, what are you going to do? There are all kinds of ways in which you, better than I, can imagine ways in which you could be shamed within our Christian parlance. We're all guilty of enough things that we're worthy of shame.

And it's only the grace of God, probably, that hides it from everybody. But the greatest shame, of course, is the shame that we bear to God because there are no secrets with him—a loss of dignity.

Paul says, as a congregation, just think about what you're doing. Is it really worth all of that? In a Sunday school class many years ago, I was talking about Christians and disputes among Christians. And this one person blurted it out, uninvited, but blurted it out, about how they felt about another person in that church who was an appliance dealer.

They owned an appliance store, refrigerators, stoves, those kinds of things. Without being asked, he started blurting out the history of his buying an appliance from this person, which was a lemon, and the other person wouldn't stand behind it, wouldn't take it back. So he viewed himself as being cheated by another Christian.

And he'd never forgiven that person. It was pretty obvious. Well, here's the culture of shame.

And I don't think he even realized that he was responsible because he felt that way to go to that person and say, look. Some time ago, I was at my wife's home, and one of her brothers was gone to seminary. He was out of the state.

He had worked for a mother-in-law. We were cleaning out his room and a chest of bureau drawers. And there were a bunch of checks in the bottom of that drawer.

There were several hundred dollars in payroll checks. My brother-in-law had not cashed. Now, how could anybody do that? Don't ask me, but he did.

And so, we gathered them up, and I rode with my mother-in-law to that business because he needed the money. He was a poor student. And we took them into the owner of the business and laid them on the desk and asked him, because they were outdated now, they were months out of date, if he would please write a new check that we could send to this fellow that he had liked as a part-time employee in his business.

And then he starts giving us this line. And he was a Christian, prominent person in a church, about, well, these are all out of date. I mean, it's his problem.

He should have cashed these a long time ago. And he doesn't know me. And my mother-in-law is sitting there and listening.

And so I speak up and tell him who I am and if that is really a Christian way to deal with this problem. Wow. He turned red. He said, you're right.

He cut a check, and we sent it off to my brother-in-law. If I had not been there, my mother-in-law would have walked out with those checks without the money. I shamed him.

I was a little irritated, to be frank, and said, look, you're a Christian. Yeah, my brother-in-law was a dummy. Why didn't he cash these things? But he didn't.

But he did work for it. And you paid him and you kept the money. Why not be a good Christian and give him his money? He's in school.

He's in seminary. Support him. And not until he knew who I was as a minister did he feel shame.

He got caught, to be frank, about his ethics. Well, we all have stories that we could tell about this. I think that our Christian culture is a culture of honor and shame.

The problem is defining what should be honored and what should be shameful. Because we all have our own little inside booklets of honor and shame that everybody's supposed to meet. But as a congregation, there are certain bottom lines that regulate a congregation and regulate our ethics that we should be in touch with.

So, I say this to your shame. This was a major judgmental statement in a culture of shame. Paul's statement implies that the church should be able to care for its internal problems with due process and binding authority.

Can't you make some judgments about things? Do you think that the guilds like the silversmiths, the tent makers, or the orators, don't you think that they had ways of regulating themselves? I'm sure they did. It wouldn't be hard to surface that. But what about the church? It's a guild, by analogy in that culture.

Can't it regulate itself? Have you ever known a church that has a grievance committee? Or a fair and responsible process to adjudicate complaints? I was a pastor. I've been an interim pastor many times and have been in Christian ministry for almost 50 years. I was ordained in 1967.

So, I'm coming up on my 50th year of ordained ministry. That's a long time. I've seen a lot of these incidents where shame should be felt, but it's not.

Where churches don't know what to do with people who are at odds with each other. Our natural tendency is to ignore it, just like we do this in families. A certain family member is not owning up to their filial responsibilities.

They're not being honest, perhaps. They're borrowing and not repaying. They're embarrassing the family in various ways.

The family won't even talk about it. Friends, good friends, won't sit down and talk about issues between themselves or the way they feel about each other. When was the last time you sat down over coffee or lunch with your best friend and said to them, tell me exactly what you think of me and don't pull any punches, and I'm absolutely serious.

Well, your friend's first thought, as yours would be about them, is I really like you, but I'm not going to tell you everything. Do you want to make it more threatening? What about your spouse? Can you have a conversation with your spouse at that level? That's the most intimidating and threatening domain of life. Because why? Because of the danger of misunderstanding, the danger of making assumptions, and the dangers of listening but not hearing.

Christian disputes are continuous and constant. How are we going to deal with them? I've never known a church with a grievance committee. In fact, I would dare

say to you that it would be exceedingly difficult in most churches to have a grievance committee that everybody in the church would say, I respect those individuals enough to live by their judgment.

What would happen in the typical American church is, say, you take it into the grievance committee, and if those idiots don't come up with your view, you're going to go out and do it somewhere else. That's American individualism. It's part of our culture, instead of Christian community.

Well, we're not too far removed from the Corinthians, even though we're cultures apart. It needs to be emphasized in the middle of page 79 that since this context is focused on vexatious litigation, it is not, therefore, to be widely applied as a prohibition for every kind of litigation, whether litigation in our cultural setting is appropriate. In other words, you can't take 1 Corinthians chapter 6 in an American Christian context as one example and say you can never use courts.

That would be a misuse of the Bible because that's not what this passage is about. It's about Roman Corinth. Now, there are certain issues in this text that are normative across cultures, but you can't make a blanket statement about courts, civil courts particularly, on the basis of this passage.

That's contextualizing the passage without its initial context and intent. Whether you use a court or not needs to be decided on a case-by-case basis. Whether a church uses a court.

When these denominations come in and say, get out, this property is ours, not yours, even though you paid for it over the course of 30 to 50 years. Some of them are even more than that. We own it because of this little clause, even though we've never been here.

You decided to join us. You signed this document. It's ours.

If you want it, you're going to have to pay for it, even though you already did. How would you like that? Well, is there a legitimate use of courts? There have been many court cases. Some of them have fallen on one side.

Some have fallen on another side for a variety of reasons, but they're adjudicated on the basis of law. Sure, it's a sad state of affairs that something like that has to happen, but we need to be careful about blanket judgments. A case-by-case basis needs to be considered.

Today's courts would rarely get involved in adjudicating personal power issues. The Roman court got involved with status issues. You might go into a court on that basis,

but you're not going to get out of there because it's adjudicated on the principles of law, not on the principles of status.

Even if you feel like justice wasn't done, supposedly, it was done on the principles of law, not on the principles of just status. Winter concludes that the methodology of vexatious litigation was being used by persons of status within the church's gatherings and that the external courts were an analogy for their behavior. It was the church acting like its world.

The same problem you had with the competition between leaders you've got here. The Corinthian church had not extricated itself from its former world and its former worldview into a Christian worldview. Every church and every Christian faces this problem because we all come out of the world into the church, and how do we deal with that? One illustration for today might be this.

What about doing business with Christians? I frequently see catalogs distributed. These are Christian business people in your city. Do business with them if you're a Christian.

I usually toss them in the file 13. The file 13 is the trash basket. I have to admit to you that when it comes to doing business, I'm going to look for the best professional with the best reputation with the least complaints.

I'm not just going to go out there and say, well, since they're a Christian, I'll do business with them. I had a situation once where I did business with a Christian person to do some work for me in my home, and we agreed upon certain issues, and that person did them, and we revised a few things. I'll admit there wasn't good communication in those revisions, but when it was all done, I got a bill for about \$1,500 more than we had agreed upon, and the person told me, well, you did this, and you did this.

Some of it was not my decision because I went and got the materials for the job. They would have bought different materials, which maybe it would have been easier for them, but they never told me that. So, it was a both-and in terms of communication, and then the person got all bent out of shape because I disputed the charge.

Well, at the end of the day, I paid the whole thing because I wasn't going to be to drag something through the mud. They did decent work, but it took them twice as long as it should have for a variety of reasons. Maybe they didn't have as many skilled people as they should have had, but at the end of the day, I paid it.

So, I didn't drag it out. I didn't argue. I didn't try to use a court.

It just wasn't worth it, and I told the person, you know, I disagree with you, but I'm going to go ahead and pay you completely because I don't want my name smudged. So, I had my moment of self-justification, I suppose, in words, but I paid for the whole thing, and who knows what they thought about it. If I could do it again, I'd probably sit down and converse more with the individual.

I kind of got ticked off because of the miscommunication on his part, and he was probably mad because he felt like I didn't communicate. That's what happens in life, and it was a bad situation. I may have made it right by paying the whole thing, but it would have been better to just to talk about it a little more.

I've been caught in that. All of us have, at one time or another, done business with Christians. You know, when we do business with Christians, we sometimes hold them to a higher standard than we hold this other person.

Well, we're talking about professional service, putting a roof on my house, cleaning my floors, this or that. I did it with you because you're Christian, and I want to patronize you, and then you do a poor job. Now, what do I do? I never have felt very comfortable going back and saying, look, you did a lousy job.

Do it again. And then they say, oh, I did a great job. What are you saying for? Well, I don't want to get into that.

If I deal with a professional who does a poor job, they know they did a poor job, and I can get another professional to say they did a poor job. If I buy a used car from a dealer, I have recourse. If I buy a used car from a Christian and it falls apart the next day, in one sense, it's not their fault.

We will assume they didn't know that the transmission was about to blow up. You see all the issues that go on here? Frankly, in many of our cultures, we're probably better off in our daily business not doing it with the Christian business because we get into those kinds of misunderstandings. That's a judgment you'll have to make, but that is an extension of the things that were going on here.

I would rather do business with a sinner and hold the sinner accountable as a business person than do business with a Christian who's lazy and unskilled and then have to call them to account. Their first thing is going to be a defense mechanism. I don't want to deal with that.

I shouldn't have to deal with that, as it creates more problems than it solves. I've been burned enough and so have you to look in other directions. That's your judgment.

You'll have to make that judgment. All right, so that's verses one through six. Let's think about verses seven and eight a little bit.

In this particular case, Paul points out that the lawsuits are merely symptomatic of deeper problems or moral defects. In verses seven to eight listen to these verses six, seven, and eight. The very fact that you have lawsuits among yourselves means you have been completely defeated already.

Why couldn't you work it out? Why not rather even be cheated? Why not be wronged? Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong. You try to get advantage over each other. You try to exercise perhaps your status over a lower status and you do this to your brothers and sisters.

Quite an accusation. Well, we've been about 45 minutes or so, so we're going to go to cut and run at this moment in chapter six. I'm going to come back in the next lecture and finish chapter six on page 79 at the bottom through the end of the notes, and we'll talk about this question through the end of chapter six in terms of courts, and then the sexuality question will come up again at the end of the chapter.

Read the chapter, read the notes, read whatever resources you've been able to surface in terms of courts, and then as we get to the end of the chapter it dovetails back to the sexual issues of chapter five because these two chapters do fit together even though we don't have to take one through eleven in chapter six as being an unpacking of five one. So, have a good day, and we'll see you at the next lecture. You

This is Dr. Gary Meadors in his teaching on the book of 1 Corinthians. This is session 16, Paul's Response to Oral Reports, 1 Corinthians 6:1-6.