

1 Corinthians 6:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Paul's sharp rebuke uses *tolmaō* (τολμάω, 'dare')—not mere courage but audacious presumption. Taking fellow believers **before the unjust** (*adikoi*, ἄδικοι, 'unrighteous ones') rather than **before the saints** (*hagioi*, ἅγιοι, 'holy ones') inverts the cosmic order: those destined to judge the world (v. 2) cannot judge trivial disputes?

The Roman legal system prized honor and shame—public litigation was performance art. Corinthian Christians, absorbed in their status-obsessed culture, weaponized pagan courts to humiliate brothers. Paul's rhetorical question drips with sarcasm: you who boast of spiritual wisdom (chs. 1-4) cannot settle petty grievances without appealing to pagans who know nothing of God's righteousness?

Historical Context

First-century Corinth had multiple courts: Roman magistrates for citizens, provincial governors for serious crimes, and local arbitration. Litigation was common among the wealthy, who used lawsuits to enhance reputation and destroy rivals. The church, composed of diverse social classes (1:26-29), imported these status games into Christian fellowship. Paul writes around 55 AD, addressing a congregation that confused worldly success with spiritual maturity.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What conflicts in your church or Christian relationships are you tempted to 'win' publicly rather than resolve biblically in private?
2. How does taking disputes before unbelievers undermine the church's witness to God's justice and reconciliation?
3. Why does Paul emphasize the saints' future role as judges (v. 2) when addressing present disputes?

Interlinear Text

Τολμᾷ	τις	ὕμῶν	πρᾶγμα	ἔχων	πρὸς	τὸν	ἕτερον	
Dare	any	of you	a matter	having	against	^{G3588}	another	
G5111	G5100	G5216	G4229	G2192	G4314		G2087	
κρίνεσθαι	ἐπὶ	τῶν	ἀδίκων	καὶ	οὐχὶ	ἐπὶ	τῶν	ἁγίων;
go to law	before	^{G3588}	the unjust	and	not	before	^{G3588}	the saints
G2919	G1909		G94	G2532	G3780	G1909		G40

Additional Cross-References

Acts 19:38 (Word): Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another.

1 Corinthians 14:33 (Holy): For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

