

## The Church Ethic 312: Political Issues



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### **Addendum: 1 Corinthians 5**

#### *Christianity and War*

It seems good to us to add this small discussion of the relevance of 1 Corinthians 5-6 for consideration along with the material we present in our Christianity and War study. We believe that 1 Corinthians 5-6 provides teaching that is specifically relevant to the matter of Christian participation in government and legal systems of the nations prior to the return of Christ and the millennial reign. Below we will provide the text of this passage and then we will provide a discussion of the relevance it has for the subject at hand.

**1 Corinthians 5:** 1 It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. 2 And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. 3 For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. 6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? 7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. 9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: 10 Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. 11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. 12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? 13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person. **6:** 1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? 2 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? 3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? 4 If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to

judge who are least esteemed in the church. 5 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? 6 But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. 7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?

As we begin it is important to note what is happening in the early portion of chapter 5. In this portion of the passage Paul is addressing a violation of Christian teaching that was occurring in the Corinthian church. In short, a man was committing a certain kind of fornication (5:1). Paul is instructing Christians in Corinth how to address this sin. In this case, Paul explains that the transgressor was to be expelled from the community of Christians at Corinth (verses 2, 5, 9-11, and 13).

These observations lead us to the first important point regarding Christian participation in government or, more precisely, as the administrators of the legal systems of the pre-millennial world. It is clear that this section of 1 Corinthians is about exercising church discipline. But it is also clear that the removal of a person from Church society is equivalent to the action of imprisonment in worldly society and nations. The purpose of imprisonment in any nation is perhaps two-fold. First, imprisonment serves to remove a violator of societal law from the society so as to prevent harm or corruption from occurring in the rest of the society. Second, imprisonment may serve in hopes of rehabilitating the offender to a point where they can safely reenter society in compliance with societal law and without risking harm or corruption to others. What Paul is advocating in 1 Corinthians 5 is excommunication. And we can reasonably conclude that it parallels imprisonment in purpose and in result.

This leads us to the second point regarding Christian involvement as administrators of the legal systems of the world. In verse 12-13, Paul declares that while Christians are obligated to take disciplinary measures within the church community (including judging violations of Christian law and removing such persons from Christian society), taking such actions over non-Christian society is, in effect, none of our business. We cannot be in the position of making legal judgments and implementing legal punishments upon non-Christians, that is, outside of the church community. Rather, according to verse 13 addressing violations of the law in non-Christian society is for God. And as Paul explains in Romans 12-13, God has appointed various rulers and authorities to bear the sword, punish wrongdoing, and execute justice (avenge).

We have included the opening verses of chapter 6 to show that we are not inserting the idea of court systems and the administration of the law code into Paul's discussion. Nor are we artificially creating a distinction between Christian society and non-Christian society. Rather, as chapter 6 plainly show Paul is speaking of courts and judges, actions and judgments taken against those who have acted contrary to societal law. Likewise, his words sustain a differentiation

between those who judge and implement justice over things in the church and those who judge and implement justice in non-Christian society.

In conclusion, 1 Corinthians 5-6 provide additional attestation of the New Testament prohibition against Christian participation in government or the administration of legal systems and implementation of justice prior to the return of Christ and the onset of his kingdom on earth. We are authorized and required to judge and take action against violations of Christ's teaching within the church (the community of Christians) in the exact same way that doing so over non-Christian society is none of our business.

**1 Corinthians 5:12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? 13 But them that are without God judgeth.** Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person (KJV)

**1 Corinthians 5:12 What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? 13 God will judge those outside.** "Expel the wicked person from among you." (NIV)

**1 Corinthians 5:12 For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? 13 God judges those outside.** "Drive out the wicked person from among you." (RSV)

**1 Corinthians 5:12 For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? 13 But those who are outside, God judges.** REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES. (NASB)