
Words of Truth

What If Brethren Have A Carnal Matter Against Each Other?

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Sometimes brethren establish business relationships with one another (Acts 18:1-3). Sometimes brethren have relationships that are not entirely spiritual (Philemon 1:1-25). Sometimes brethren may have financial arrangements between each other (Proverbs 6:1). In matters such as these, there are plenty of opportunities for disagreements to arise.

When it comes to spiritual matters, we are easily able to resolve differences between faithful brethren by using the Scriptures. If two brethren disagree, we can just open the Lord's word and let that resolve any and all questions peacefully (Psalms 19:7-11, Psalms 119:97-105, Luke 4:4, I Corinthians 1:17-2:16, Philipians 3:16, Colossians 3:16-17, and II Timothy 3:14-17). We can remind each other that the Lord's standard is our judge (John 12:48).

When it comes to matters of worldly business, etc. however; it may not seem as though the answers can be as clear as they are in spiritual matters. To some degree, that is true. How can you settle a business argument over whether or not to use digital programs like Quickbooks for accounting over using paper ledgers? How can brethren settle terms if they agreed to a loan and then there is a discrepancy in payment history?

Here is something we should remember. The word of God does NOT fail us. We have been given the means to have knowledge in all things pertaining to life and godliness (II Peter 1:3-4). While the word of God does not teach us what system of accounting is the best to use or how to keep track of our loan arrangements; God does supply us with a means to settle such disputes among saints. It is not to take one another before the courts of men. What the Lord tells us is to use our brethren to settle our carnally related disputes.

The Lord's Method Of Settling Such Disputes

Among the many problems that the congregation in Corinth had, one of them was that they took each other before the courts of men. In dealing with this problem, we find God does have a solution for us in handling carnal disputes among each other. Notice: *"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. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren” (I Corinthians 6:1-8).

There are a few things I want to emphasize from what you just read. The fact that they went to the courts of men against each other was addressed by the word “dare”. The idea behind that word, in the negative, is that such was bold, extreme conduct (Strong’s # 5111). The very first verse established that matters, even of a carnal matter, should not be brought before the unjust as a choice over brethren. How could a Christian even consider such an action (Proverbs 29:27)? The Lord then established that saints have such credibility as judges that should be trusted. After all, the Lord is said to come in judgment with the saints (Jude 1:14-15). Figuratively, John saw in a vision saints reigning with Christ (Revelation 20:4). As joint-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17), we shall have authority as the children of God (I John 3:1-3) even over angels. Since the Lord has such faith in the ability of righteous judgment of His faithful saints, we should too.

Paul then went on further to state that the least esteemed in the church should judge these matters. This principle should not be foreign to us (Romans 12:16 and I Corinthians 12:22-27). Paul then established the shameful nature of their actions, in going to court before unbelievers, suggested that there was not a wise saint among them (I Corinthians 15:34). If we cannot help each other in matters of counsel, that is an indictment on the congregation. We should be able to look to each other for counsel (Proverbs 15:22). Paul, through the Holy Spirit, established that there should have been a willingness to allow the wrong to be set aside even to be defrauded rather than go to the courts of the ungodly. Principles behind that statement are loudly echoed in the Scriptures (Matthew 5:38-42, Luke 6:30-36, Romans 12:17-21, Romans 14:13, Romans 14:19-20, and I Thessalonians 5:15).

How could a brother or sister sue one another in the courts of men and claim to love one another? Can we be saved without brotherly love (I John 3:11-18 and I John 4:7-21)? There you have it! Lean on the Lord’s way of handling disputes if you cannot overlook it.

Conclusion

Jeremiah wrote: *“O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps”* (Jeremiah 10:23). Trust in the ways of God rather than those of your own even when it comes to “non-spiritual matters” (Proverbs 3:5-7). If you dig deep enough, there is wisdom throughout God’s word to help us handle all things properly.