

Do Not Sue The Bretheren

What seems like a very long time ago, I did some work for a law firm that specialized in Church disputes. At first I couldn't believe that such a practice could even exist, but there it was, right in front of me. I always had a hard time with that, but in retrospect, like so many of life's other tough lessons, I think it prepared me well for some of the things that came later.

Fast-forward to now:

This past week my Church put a pretty disturbing memo in the general Sunday program. It was from the Deacon Board, and it addressed an issue involving a lawsuit that some current and former Church members filed against the Church itself, along with several other current members, most of whom serve on one of the two Joint Boards.

The memo attempted to correct a justification made by the plaintiffs, via a letter to many of the membership, about the propriety of filing the suit in the first place. Apparently there must have been some kind of friction going on behind all the scenes.

Plaintiffs, at least one of whom is a licensed Theologian (and that's the first part I find most disturbing) were relying on eight Chapters from the Book of Acts to justify their actions (Acts Chapters 21 through 28).

Defendants allege in the Church memo, something they decided to publish *sua sponte* (that is to circulate among the members without notice) that the plaintiffs had read Acts incorrectly. And the defendants then posed their own interpretation of the scripture.

Now, as much as I love this process, I hate when it permeates the Body of Christ like this. And what neither side seems to realize is that they are both mis-handling the Scripture. And therein lies the greatest potential danger.

First of all, can you imagine the damage this could do to non-believers who are on the "outside looking in" on all of this. I'm talking about the judiciary mostly, the modern-day Pharisees if you will, who are processing the suit, but I am also concerned about anyone else who may be considering joining forces with those of us who are trying to get all of this right (those of us working fervently to properly interpret the Scriptures), not withstanding any personal agenda whatsoever.

This kind of thing can really damage the Church universally.

Secondly, I think it's absolutely frightening that senior Church officials have actually immersed themselves into this childish affair, all this tit-for-tat stuff is absolutely maddening when there is so much more we need to be working on (War on Poverty, Justice Ministries, etc.). To me it demonstrates that we as a Christian society have probably not come all that far from where the Pharisees and the Sadducees were over two thousand years ago. And wasn't that a huge part of the fundamental reason for Christ's sacrifice on the Cross in the first place.

I don't even think we should be engaged in this dispute, especially since there are enormous, and seemingly insurmountable, and certainly an unbelievable and ever-growing number of Social ills that desperately need to be addressed by the Body of Christ (by us). Do we really have time for any of this nonsense, the in-fighting!

If I were the judge, I would gladly risk reversal and throw this whole matter out on the current state of the pleadings alone, WITH prejudice! That notwithstanding, here's the real most troubling issue for me: Neither the Theologians, nor the Attorneys involved in this case seem to have enough of a fundamental knowledge of the Word of God (the Bible), to realize that if we are going to proceed according to Scripture, and I guess the plaintiffs have opened the door to at least some of the Scriptures to be controlling (or at least influential), rather than just the statutes and case law, the real controlling Scripture is clearly 1 Corinthians 6:1-11.

That Scripture/ Biblical Statute reads as follows:

1 Corinthians 6:1-11 (NKJV)

Do Not Sue the Brethren

Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? ²Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? ³Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? ⁴If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge? ⁵I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren? ⁶But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers!

⁷Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather *let yourselves* be cheated? ⁸No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and *you do* these things *to your* brethren! ⁹Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, ¹⁰nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

1 Corinthians 6 has always been one of my favorite Scriptures because it kind-of addresses the issue of Standing where believers are concerned. I think it should be fundamental, especially among believers. But I see by the actions of both parties to this, and many other Church legal disputes, that we as a Body still have a long way to go, and that's so enormously, unbelievably, tragically, unfortunate. The whole world needs our help, but here we are creating new material for "Springer".

I apologize for my outburst this morning, I really needed to get that out. I see it, though, as a righteous indignation, rather than just an angry outburst, and I think, therefore, that it's justified according to Scripture. I may be wrong...

I hope you have an amazing day!!

- Jack