

Reputation Matters

1 Corinthians 6:1-11

I'm guessing it's been an interesting offseason for those of you who are Packers' fans. (Picture) Aaron Rodgers has been in the news lately and for reasons the Packers would probably not like to see. Some of the headlines I ran across this week are:

- Aaron Rodgers doesn't want to return to Green Bay Packers, sources say
- Aaron Rodgers wants out; and the Packers have only themselves to blame
- Aaron Rodgers and the Packers are heading for a divorce. How did we get here?
- Irate Aaron Rodgers wants Packers to trade him to one of these three teams after ugly fallout in Green Bay

Though the details aren't clear, it is clear that there are major problems between Rodgers and the Packers organization, especially with General Manager Brian Gutekunst. From what I could find, one of the biggest problems came in the 2020 draft when the Packers used their first-round pick to draft a quarterback, which was a questionable decision in the first place, but it was even more offensive to Rodgers because they didn't give him a heads up that that's what they were going to do. Another problem has been with the terms of Rodgers' contract that don't give him some of the guarantees he wants. Both of these things have apparently offended Rodgers to the point where he feels very under-appreciated by the Packers organization in light of all his accomplishments.

These are the kinds of things that owners, general managers, and coaches don't want other people to know about. It's bad for the players, it's bad for team morale, it's bad for the Packers reputation and public image. It's the kind of attention you really don't want to get.

In our passage for today we'll see that the church in Corinth was getting that kind of attention as well. They had conflict in the church and were airing their dirty laundry for others to see. Paul was very upset to hear that their problems were being publicized and he addresses it in the first half of 1 Corinthians 6.

For us it raises the question of what kind of influence our behavior in public is having on the reputation of Christ and the church. Do we think about how our lives are affecting the church's reputation? It's not just about me and my life; it's

not just about you and your life. It's about the kingdom of God and what kind of influence our lives are having upon it. Are we drawing people into Christ's kingdom by how we live our lives? Or are we pushing them away?

Let's take a look at what was happening in Corinth and then think about our own lives and if there are any changes the Lord would want us to make.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:1-3.

When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? ² Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? ³ Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life!

Paul brings up the surface problem in these verses. People in the church had grievances against one another – there were unresolved disputes among them and they were taking their cases to the civil courts instead of the leaders in the church. Later on in verse 7 he mentions that some were committing fraud and injustice against others in the church and it appears that when their cheating and deception was found out there wasn't resolution – there were ongoing arguments and those who felt they were being wronged took their cases to the civil courts. So Christians were taking fellow Christians to court to settle their disputes instead of going to the leaders of the church.

Paul was exasperated about the whole thing. In these verses he points out the foolishness of what they were doing because the most capable people of making wise and righteous judgments about their disputes were right there in the church. They were the ones who had the Spirit of God and the mind of Christ and therefore were able to rightly judge all things. But they were bypassing these people to seek the ruling of the worldly court system instead.

Paul couldn't understand why they would ever do that. He points out that the saints will be the ones to judge the world as well as to judge angels, and if they could judge matters of such weighty significance, were they not capable of making judgments about far less important matters? It didn't make any sense.

But there was an even bigger problem that was making Paul so upset and he brings that up in the next few verses.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:4-8.

⁴ So if you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church? ⁵ I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers, ⁶ but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers? ⁷ To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? ⁸ But you yourselves wrong and defraud—even your own brothers!

The most serious problem that was happening is brought up in verse 6 where Paul says, “*but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers.*” You can hear that Paul was beside himself with frustration. It was bad enough that they were wronging and defrauding one another. It was even worse that they were filing lawsuits, but his greatest frustration is that they were doing it all publicly in front of unbelievers. How could they flaunt their sinful behavior in front of unbelievers?

For these kinds of things to be going on inside the church was bad enough, but to bring them out in public for everyone to see was inexcusable. They were bringing shame upon the church in front of the very people they were trying to reach. They were ruining the church’s reputation. Why would anyone be interested in becoming a Christian after seeing what they were doing? Paul tells them: “Wouldn’t it be better to suffer wrong? Wouldn’t it be better to be defrauded?”

So the biggest problem in this situation is that they were bringing shame upon reputation of Christ and the church by their sinful behavior. They weren’t thinking beyond themselves. They were only concerned about seeking their own justice without thinking about how what they were doing was affecting their witness and mission.

It’s not just about us. Our behavior and decisions have an effect on what people think of Christians, Christ, and the church. And because of that, we need be careful how we live our lives.

This is a common thing when it comes to families and it becomes very clear when you become a parent. You love your kids, but you want them to bring honor to your family by the way they live their lives. When they do something in public

that's foolish or embarrassing, it often brings feelings of shame because of what it can do to the family reputation. (Picture)

Have you ever had a toddler throw a temper tantrum in Wal Mart or the grocery store? How does that make you feel? It makes you feel so embarrassed. And if you're like me, you don't get embarrassed because you're worried about what people will think of your kid, you get embarrassed because of what they'll think about you. "They must be a terrible parent if their kid behaves like that."

Now imagine having your kids fighting in front of a bunch of people. How would that make you feel? I think Paul was feeling like that as he heard about what was happening in Corinth, only it wasn't just a family's reputation on the line, it was the church... it was Jesus Christ... And that was a big deal.

He finishes with a stern reminder.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

⁹Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, ¹⁰nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Their behavior was falling in line with those who were unrighteous and who would not inherit the kingdom of God. So Paul reminds them that's who they were, but that's not who they are anymore. They were washed and sanctified and justified by the Lord Jesus Christ, and the implication is that they should live like it. In Ephesians 4:1 he wrote this to another church: "*I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.*" Live in a way that you bring honor to the One who saved you, not to bring shame.

Our behavior matters. Our reputation matters. It has an effect on the reputation of the whole church and of Christ. What kind of reputation are you building for Christ and the church when you're with your friends? At school? At your workplace? Are you living your life in a way that attracts people to Christ, or pushes them away?