

Make friends quickly with your opponent

by William MacDonald

Transcript

“Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way; in order that your opponent may not deliver you to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison” (Mt. 5:25 NASB)

One of the surface lessons we learn from this passage is that Christians should not be prone to engage in lawsuits. It is a natural reaction to rush to court to seek redress for grievances and damages. But the believer is guided by higher principles than natural reactions. The will of God often cuts across the grain of nature.

Our law courts today are glutted with accident claims, malpractice suits, divorce cases and inheritance claims. In many cases, people rush to the lawyer in the hope of getting rich quick. But the Christian must settle things by the power of love and not by the processes of law. As someone has said, “If you go in for legal processes, then legal processes will get you, and you will pay the last penny.”

The only one who is sure to win is the lawyer; his fee is assured. A cartoon pictured the process this way. A plaintiff was pulling the head of a cow, the defendant was pulling the tail—and the lawyer was milking the cow.

In 1 Corinthians 6 Christians are positively forbidden to go to law against other Christians. For one thing they should take their disputes to some wise man in the church. But even beyond that they should be willing to be wronged and cheated rather than go to law before the judges of this world's system. This, incidentally, would rule out all cases of divorce involving believing partners.

But what about cases between a believer and an unbeliever? Doesn't the Christian have to stand up for his rights? The answer is that it is far better to forego his rights in order to demonstrate that Christ makes a difference in a person's life. It does not require divine life to institute a suit against someone who has wronged him. But it does take divine life to commit his cause to God and use the case as an opportunity to witness to the saving, transforming power of Christ. As much as possible, he should live at peace with all men (Rom. 12:18).

“A man started to build a fence between himself and his neighbor. The neighbor came and said; ‘When you bought that lot you bought a court case along with it. That fence is going to be five feet in my land.’ The man replied, ‘I knew I would always have a nice neighbor next to me. I'll tell you what I suggest: You put up the fence where you think it should go, send me the bill and I'll pay for it.’ The fence was never put

up. No need!" (E. Stanley Jones).

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