

# **“Be Not Deceived”**

## **1 Corinthians 6:9-11**

This text is part of what began in verse one, where Paul is dealing with the believers in the church going to court to defraud another believer (suing him for the most trivial of matters), specifically as it related to the church (the greater point, as found in verse seven, is that we are to suffer the wrong rather than bring reproach on the name of Christ, the church, and for the sake of the gospel message).

He gives the church in Corinth this portion to show how egregious their sin had become to the outside world, and to motivate them to come back to the Lord in repentance and stop living like they used to live, in the filth of the world.

Going back to chapter five and dealing with the issue of sin being not only allowed in the church but being glorified by the church, Paul addresses that particular sin again (along with the other things he points out in 5:11), and “shames” them into confronting that sin. He does this by showing the conflict between the fleshly nature and the new, regenerated spiritual nature; by confronting them with the sinful life from which they had been redeemed; and by commending them for the change that had been wrought in them (that he now wanted them to come back to).

When dealing with this text (as is true of any difficult text), it is important we keep it within the context in which it was given, as well as taking into account the rest of Scripture – using the Bible to interpret itself. As will be pointed out from other Scripture, this text is not saying that if a believer commits one of these sins, he loses his salvation and can’t go to heaven;

nor is it saying that if a lost person commits one of these sins he can't go to heaven. There is just too much other Scripture to show this interpretation is simply wrong (including the very content of this letter to the Corinthians, as seen in chapter five and the man taken in the affair with his step mother). It must, then, mean something different.

Before we delve into the actual "meat" of this text, a few things need to be said regarding the title – "Be not deceived" (or, "do not be deceived," as in other versions of the Bible).

First: this particular phrase was used to get the reader to pay attention to what he was saying, and to stop listening to what others were saying in contradiction to his teaching, and, more importantly, to the teachings of the Scriptures as a whole. It is found throughout the New Testament when the writers were concerned the readers (or listeners) were in danger of being led astray by false teaching.

Second: "Be not deceived" – "Do not be led astray by plausible talk to cover up sin as mere animal behaviorism" (Robertson). "*You must not be deceived* translates a *present passive imperative*. The passive voice reveals the outside force of false teachers, deceivers, acting on these believers. Paul commands them—imperative—to reject such influence, to not allow themselves to be deceived by it" (UCRT Cross Reference).

Third: Albert Barnes gives these three points as it relates to this phrase:

- That they were in danger of being deceived.
- It implies, that there was "no necessity" of their being deceived. They might know the

truth. They might easily understand these matters. It might be plain to them that those who indulged in these things could not be saved.

- It implies that it was of high importance that they should not be deceived.

With all that said, this is what they were not to be deceived in misunderstanding, or in misapplying to their lives:

## **I. CONFLICT BETWEEN THE TWO NATURES – VS. 9A**

***A. The Apostle Paul writes about this conflict that the church in Corinth was demonstrating in their actions in his letter to the church at Rome (which was apparently written shortly after this letter) – the conflict between the sinful, fleshly nature that we still have to deal with after salvation, and the new, spiritual nature that we have in Christ.***

### **Romans 7:15–25**

**15** For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

**16** If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.

**17** Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

**18** For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

**19** For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

**20** Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I

that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

<sup>21</sup> I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

<sup>22</sup> For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

<sup>23</sup> But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

<sup>24</sup> O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

<sup>25</sup> I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

***B. We see some of this conflict earlier in this letter to the Corinthians – 3:1-3***

**1 Corinthians 3:1-3**

<sup>1</sup> And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

<sup>2</sup> I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.

<sup>3</sup> For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

***C. "Know ye not" – literally, "Or, know ye not" (the word "or" connects this with the previous text as a continuation) – as seen in the last message, this is something they should have already known, either (or, both) from Paul's previous teaching or the already-recorded Scripture.***

## Isaiah 55:7

<sup>7</sup> Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

## Galatians 5:19–21

<sup>19</sup> Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

<sup>20</sup> Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

<sup>21</sup> Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

NOTE: (going back to a point made in the introduction) Relating to this text in Galatians, as it relates to the text under review in 1 Corinthians, the following may be helpful:

To say that this verse is saying that if a born-again child of God commits one of these sins that he can't go to heaven when he dies would be a misinterpretation. In fact, Galatians 6:1 tells the church what to do if a Christian is found to be in sin, and considering where that verse is found, it would be fair to the Bible to say that it is talking about someone who has been found to have committed one of the specified sins in these verses. There are some things "lost in the translation," so to speak, from the original languages and the English language. One of the things "lost" is the understanding of the English word "do." To the modern person today that word means, if

taken in the context of this verse without understanding any more, that if a person commits one of these sins even once, he won't go to heaven. To the person reading this letter, written in Greek by the Apostle Paul, in the time it was written, would have understood the word to mean someone who habitually, or continually, without any remorse or indication of change, commits one of these sins would not go to heaven when they die. There was another Greek word used to describe someone who does something occasionally, as opposed to habitually. "Prassō is the verb for habitual practice (our very word, in fact), not poieō for occasional doing. The habit of these sins is proof that one is not in the Kingdom of God and will not inherit it" (Robertson).

#### ***D. "That the unrighteous"***

1. This Greek word (ἀδικέω) – translated "wrong" in the previous verse, is the verb form of this adjective (ἀδικος). The word "unrighteous" is referring back the issue of verse 7-8, and the "wrong" that was being done by the church.
2. This phrase goes further back to 5:11, in the phrase "If any man that is called a brother be a fornicator..." – there is a connection here with those that claimed to be a part of the kingdom of God, but their lives did not bear that out.
3. Another important point to make here is that the believer in Christ is never considered to be "unrighteous" in the eyes

of God – that’s what is referenced when he says they were “justified” – the believer is now clothed in Christ’s righteousness, and not his own, and as such he is not considered “unrighteous.” (Rom. 1:17; 3:21-22; 10:3, 6; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 2:16; 3:11; 2 Pet. 1:1)

### 2 Corinthians 5:21

<sup>21</sup> For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

### Philippians 3:9

<sup>9</sup> And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

4. This text is clearly dealing with those that were in the church but were never truly converted. It doesn’t mean a believer cannot commit these acts, or will lose his salvation if he does, it is simply pointing out that those that live in their sins are indicating they were never saved. This is similar to the contrast in Rev. 21:8, 27; 22:11.

### Revelation 21:8

<sup>8</sup> But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

### Revelation 21:27

<sup>27</sup> And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever

worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

#### Revelation 22:11

<sup>11</sup> He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

### ***E. "Shall not inherit"***

1. Simply to obtain, acquire, possess – spoken only of the friends of God as receiving admission to the kingdom of heaven and its attendant privileges (Zodhiates).
2. 1 Cor. 15:50 says that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." This is speaking of the rapture, and our glorification in heaven – the sin of this world, nor anything it has touched, can be part of the eternal kingdom. That is why our righteousness, apart from Christ, is of no value.

#### Isaiah 64:6

<sup>6</sup> But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

### ***F. "The kingdom of God"***

1. This "is a phrase used in two senses in the New Testament: a present spiritual domain in which believers in Christ are members with social and moral obligation

to one another, in which the will of God is the standard of thinking and living; in brief, it is God's rule in the hearts and lives of Christians. Second, a future stage of this same kingdom, the eschatological rule of Christ at and after the second coming; the kingdom of glory in Heaven. What does it mean here? Likely the whole realm of the kingdom is in Paul's mind, but judging from the context, preceding and succeeding, he is emphasizing its present stage, especially its social and moral aspects. It is litigation in the former verses, personal purity of its members in the succeeding verses. Since that is his thought, he means that those guilty of these grievous offenses, against oneself and against his brother, cannot participate in the spiritual and moral duties and privileges and blessings of the present kingdom life. Those that practice these sins cannot at the same time be doing the will of God." (Charles B. Williams)

2. The above point is born out in 5:5, in the phrase, "deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh." The purpose of the discipline was not punitive, but, as a parent disciplines a child to get them to change their actions, so this form of discipline in the church is intended to change those who are teaching false doctrines (as in 1 Timothy) and/or those practicing open, egregious sin (as in this text). There is always just cause for the judgment that God sends, or that He ordains in Scripture.

Romans 14:16-18

<sup>16</sup> Let not then your good be evil spoken of:

<sup>17</sup> For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

<sup>18</sup> For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

#### 1 Corinthians 4:20

<sup>20</sup> For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.

3. To further support this point, Jesus said much on the issue of the kingdom of God (and the kingdom of heaven, in Matthew). Luke 17:20-21 gives one of those truths, as it relates to the content of this message.

#### Luke 17:20-21

<sup>20</sup> And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, **The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:**

<sup>21</sup> **Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.**

- a) By being part of the true Kingdom of God is done by being born-again on the inside, not just making a show of spirituality on the outside, as did the Pharisees (and as those leaders in Corinth were doing with their speeches).
- b) The Pharisees, in their frustration with what Jesus was teaching, became indignant and "demanded," if Jesus was God, they wanted to know when the Kingdom of God would be established -

their intent was the earthly kingdom as prophesied in the Old Testament.

- c) The answer Jesus gave was not the answer they wanted but was an answer they, and every lost person, needed:

*(1) The Kingdom of God isn't going to come "with observation" – it won't be visibly seen*

*(2) But it comes "within you" – it is dealing with a change of heart, and the fact that the kingdom of God that Jesus spoke of was that part of God that salvation brings to every person who believes on Christ – it is speaking of soul-salvation*

Conclusion: I'm glad my salvation is entirely a work of grace, and not of any works or merit on my part, because then it could be lost. We are not sinlessly perfect yet, but we are to be striving for that holiness spoken of in Scripture. As we live life in this sinful, fleshly nature, there will be a conflict that we will deal with constantly, and the devil will make sure we are aware of our failures (as well as the Holy Spirit convicting of us of them). This text is given, as stated earlier, to "shame" us into living like a believer, rather than what we used to be.

Are we living like we belong to the kingdom of God?  
Are we living like we are saved, redeemed from a life of sin?

Or, maybe you've not ever been redeemed, and know nothing of the power over sin that Christ has given to those that accept His payment for their sins. Today is that day!

## **II. CONFRONTATION WITH WHAT SIN IS – VS. 9B-10**

Remember that this passage is part of the greater text that began in verse one, and is dealing with the continuing problem in the church at Corinth of those that were living in open sin and claiming to be believers (and, in some cases, it would seem, were even in leadership positions in the church). As we saw in the first point, what is described in these two verses is a lifestyle that is antithetical to a true believer and will prevent that believer from being used of God in advancement of His Kingdom. This text is not saying one will lose their salvation if they struggle with or commit one of these sins.

As one looks at this text, much attention is given to the end of verse nine, as if that was all that it says, and the issue of homosexuality is the focal point of many. But that's not all that is here – in fact, one thing that is almost accepted without really any argument is that of adultery. God puts that in almost every list of sins in the Bible, and yet very few preachers address it.

Another thing to keep in mind as we view this text, or any other text in Scripture that is controversial, is that the underlying theme of Scripture on every page is that God loved us, and Jesus died for our sins so that we could live a holy, concentrated life for Him. That is the basis of all that is said in this text, as well as every other text in Scripture. The reason it is all here is so that we, as believers in Christ will be able to reach the world with the gospel message.

The sins listed here are those that plagued the city of Corinth, and that would have been part of the culture of those that were now part of the

church. They had to overcome their own cultural relativity before they could be the church they were intended to be. The same is true of any church, anywhere on earth today (and in every other generation, for that matter). Sin needs to be named, called out, and forsaken – no matter the cost.

### Call It by Its Real Name

Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman told of a distinguished Methodist minister of Australia who preached on sin. One of his church officers came afterward to talk with him in his study. He said to the minister: "Dr. Howard, we don't want you to talk so plainly about sin, because if our boys and girls hear you talking so much about sin, they will more easily become sinners. Call it a mistake if you will, but do not speak so plainly about sin." The minister took down a small bottle of strychnine that was marked "Poison." He said, "I see what you want me to do. You want me to change the label, such as 'Essence of Peppermint.' Don't you see what would happen? The milder you make the label, the more dangerous you make the poison."

### **A. "Fornicators" – as some versions have it, sexual immorality**

"Fornication" comes from a word (πορνεία) that was used historically in Roman days for a prostitute and came to mean (and is used in this sense in Scripture) any sexual sin. It is translated "sexual immorality" in the ESV, which gives the sense of the word. It speaks of the act, not the temptation to act.

It has its roots, and is historically speaking of, a male prostitute in its original use.

## **B. "Idolaters"**

1. Notice that this is between "fornicators" and "adulterers" – "Idolatry is here placed between fornication and adultery, because they generally accompanied it" (Wesley).
2. The inclusion of this term (which is a transliterated word from Greek) in the letter to the Corinthians has a more relevant application to their culture than it does to us in the Western cultures of today, and that application is important in understanding this entire text. It was their history of idolatry that was the root cause of the other sins listed here.

The following is from an article written by Valerie A. Abrahamsen, a Harvard-trained New Testament scholar (found at <https://www.wisdomwordspdf.org/2018/02/16/ancient-corinth-gods-goddesses/>):

One aspect of ancient Corinth that has a bearing on the history of Christianity is the other deities worshiped there at the time of St. Paul and in the centuries thereafter. Many of these deities were female, something that may be less well known today. Relatedly, there are also religious remains that provide ample evidence for the involvement of women in cultic activities.

In addition to temples located in the forum, a temple to Demeter and Kore was found on the northern slope of Acrocorinth. According to the Greek travel writer Pausanias, a spring behind the Aphrodite temple on Acrocorinth was linked to the Peirene Fountain. Also, statues to various female deities adorned the forum area, as mentioned above. Pausanias and

archaeological remains attest to the existence in the forum area of impressive ones to the Ephesian Artemis [photo left], Nike, Tyche, Aphrodite (the latter two perhaps housed in separate small temples) and Athena (a colossal bronze statue), as well as to male gods Dionysos and Clarian Apollo.

Aphrodite was probably the most important of the female deities in the Corinthian region. Corinth was indeed known, in the classical period, as Aphrodite's city, and she was identified by the late second-century CE writer Alkiphron as "guardian of the city," at least for its women.

3. The importance of the issue of worshipping female deities plays into the last two sins mentioned in verse nine - "effeminate" and "abusers of themselves with mankind"
4. The word "idolater" means more than just having another god that is worshipped, but is one that means to be devoted to, or, literally, to be a servant of. In Corinth, as well as in many other Greek cities of the day, those steeped in idolatry would often live out their lives in servitude in the various temples, with both men and women becoming "temple prostitutes" for those deities.

### **C. "Adulterers"**

1. One who is unfaithful in their marriage. There is no stronger language used in Scripture than what God says about adultery.
2. This includes a "one-night stand," as well

as a pattern of infidelity. The difference between adultery and fornication is adultery is spoken of only within the bounds of marriage, while fornication is sexual immorality of all kinds (including, but not specific, to marriage).

#### Galatians 5:19–21

**19** Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

**20** Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

**21** Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

3. The sin of adultery in the Levitical law carried the same penalty as does that of homosexuality – both are viewed by God in the same light.

#### Leviticus 18:20–25

**20** Moreover thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbour's wife, to defile thyself with her.

**21** And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD.

**22** Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.

**23** Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it is confusion.

**24** Defile not ye yourselves in any of these

things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you:

<sup>25</sup> And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants.

#### **D. "Effeminate"**

1. The word (μαλακός) means "soft to the touch, spoken of clothing made of soft materials, fine texture" (Zodhiates).
2. Dr. Wuest translates the word with this: "[T]hose who are of a voluptuous nature, given to the gratification of sensual, immoral appetites."
3. The ESV combines this word and the next into one simple statement – "men who practice homosexuality"
4. Those who want to justify their same-sex lifestyle have found numerous ways to interpret this text, as well as the several others found throughout Scripture to allow them to live in their sin without conviction. There may be some truth to their arguments, but the simple fact is this word, and the following one, point very clearly to the biblical view of same-sex relationships as being antisciptural, and not in line with what a representative of the kingdom of God should be.
5. The word "effeminate" here doesn't necessarily mean one who is drawn to other men (some have it as pederasty – man and boy; while some have it as the partner in a homosexual relationship that

is the feminine). In ancient Greece (and specifically in Corinth), this word was used by writers to describe those that were given to a lifestyle of ease and pampering. It was often used of those that were given to a lifestyle of arts and music rather than of manual labor and sweat. The context of those writings was that of upbringing and environment – given the circumstances that surrounded those boys and young men, they were producing “effeminate” men, which seemed, in their minds, to lead to a lifestyle of homosexuality. Keep in mind that 15 of the first 18 senators of Rome were either bisexual or homosexual, so history bears this out. (For further study see <https://christianstudies.wordpress.com/2011/06/04/does-the-greek-word-malakos-refer-to-homosexual-acts/>)

***E. “Abusers of themselves with mankind” – all one word in the Greek - ἀρσενικοίτης***

1. The word comes from two Greek words: ἀρσεν, which means male; and κοίτη, which means bed. The Greek word “koites” is found in the English word “coitus” (sexual intercourse).
2. Many say Paul made this word up, which maybe he did to teach the truth he wanted to convey, but this was the inspired Word of God that he was writing, so if anybody made up the word it would have been the Holy Spirit. And, to that point, the readers of the letter he wrote to the church at Corinth would have certainly known what

he meant by it, even if it wasn't a word they were familiar with.

3. There is no rational, logical, etymologically correct way of interpreting this word than to interpret it to mean men lying with men for the purpose of sexual gratification – that is literally what the two words that make up this Greek word mean.
4. That all being said, keep in mind that the Levitical law, which this text speaks to, in part, says the same of the adulterer as it does same-sex relationship.

#### Leviticus 20:10

<sup>10</sup> And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

#### Leviticus 20:13

<sup>13</sup> If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.

5. The word for "lie" in the above referenced verses, in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) is the word "κοίτη," which makes up part of the word under consideration.
6. Until the generation that is alive today, this word has almost always meant, in the context with which it appears, both in Scripture and in extra-biblical writings, homosexual relationships, and was always, in that context, consider sin (or

evil). The church, and believers, never considered it (until now) to be anything else. So, I ask, was the church, for the first 2,000 years of its history, wrong?

## **F. "Thieves"**

1. Comes from the Greek word "κλέπτης" – where the English word "kleptomaniac" comes from.
2. This word is used of those that steal by fraud and in secret, while the word ληστής (lestes) – translated as "thief" or "robber" is one who does so openly and violently (Zodhiates).
3. The word is also used metaphorically of false teachers or deceivers who steal men away from the truth (Zodhiates).

John 10:8-10

**8** All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.

**9** I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

**10** The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

## **G. "Covetous"**

1. There are at least two Greek words translated "covetous" in the New Testament. This one, and one used in 1 Timothy 3:3, in the qualifications of a

pastor/overseer, where the one used there is one that literally translates "not a lover of silver/money."

2. This word (πλεονέκτης) is one that speaks of one who simply wants more, a person covetous of something that others have – it is what we think of when we here of someone coveting something others have.
3. This is what would have led to thieving, in many instances.

#### **H. "Drunkards"**

1. This particular Greek word (μέθυσος) is only used twice – both in First Corinthians (here and in 5:11).
2. The word literally means "tipsy" – or, in our vernacular today, a falling-down drunk.

#### **I. "Revilers"**

1. As with the last word, only used here and in 5:11, where it is translated "railer"
2. Given by Bill Mounce as "slanderer, verbal abuser."
3. Albert Barnes: A reproachful man; a man of coarse, harsh, and bitter words; a man whose characteristic it was to abuse others; to vilify their character, and wound their feelings. It is needless to say how much this is contrary to the spirit of Christianity, and to the example of the Master, "who when he was reviled, reviled

not again.”

4. Some versions of the Bible (those that are predominately dynamic equivalent translations) have this as “anyone who curses,” “makes use of strong language,” etc. That is not the correct, nor even a good, translation of the word.

### ***J. “Extortioners”***

1. Bill Mounce: swindling, robbing, implying violence in the process; (destructively) ferocious, ravenous; as a noun, a (violent) robber or swindler.
2. This word (ἀρνᾶξ) is only used five times in the New Testament – four times as “extortioner” and once as “ravening.”

Matthew 7:15

***15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.***

### ***K. “Shall inherit the kingdom of God”***

1. Those that habitually practice these things, and have no remorse or conviction for doing so, but take pleasure in them without regard, are demonstrating that they are not part of the kingdom of God on earth, nor will they be part of the future kingdom of God in heaven.
2. Those that are truly born again and commit one (or more) of these (or any other violation against the Word of God, either of commission or omission) will not

be part of the peace and joy and contentment that being part of the kingdom of God brings to the believer.

Conclusion: The entire scope of this text, beginning in verse one, is here to help the church know what it is to be a Christian, and how one is to behave. The Corinthian church was not living the way they should, and it showed.

There is an epidemic, of sorts, in our churches today of those that claim to be followers of Christ yet are not living as the Bible teaches. What used to be sin doesn't seem to be sin anymore, and just as they did in the church at Corinth, the church today is not only allowing for open sin among believers but are justifying it from the pulpit ("glorifying" in it as they did in Corinth). The church will never reach the lost, the believers will not have power in their lives with the open sin being allowed and supported.

What was sin in the past is still sin today!

A Fence or an Ambulance

A certain community was near a dangerous highway curve where several cars had misguidedly taken the curve and fallen over a cliff. Great discussion took place in the town over what to do about the situation. Some in the discussion group thought it a good idea to station an ambulance at the bottom of this cliff to give immediate aid to the victims. Wiser heads suggested it might be better to erect a fence around the curve on top of the cliff.

To us, such a discussion is ridiculous. We know it is much better to prevent accidents and deaths than to treat them after the

fact. Let us not overlook the truth that this principle also has much spiritual merit.

We need not debate whether Christians sin. The New Testament speaks plainly. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar, and His Word has no place in our lives. The Apostle John immediately follows this truth with a powerful statement of assurance. "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have One who speaks to the Father in our defense, Jesus Christ, the Righteous One" (1 John 2:1, 2).

Although forgiveness and grace are abundant, Jesus does not intend for us to just focus on these. He not only provides forgiveness, He also gives us the power to keep from sin. How much better that we focus on the "fence" at the top rather than on the "ambulance" at the bottom.

### **III. COMMENDATION FOR THEIR CHANGE – VS. 11**