

“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.

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

²² For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

²³ 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.

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

²⁵ 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

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

² 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.

³ 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

⁷ 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

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.

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

²¹ 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

⁹ 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

⁸ 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

²⁷ 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

¹¹ 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

⁶ 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

¹⁶ Let not then your good be evil spoken of:

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

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

1 Corinthians 4:20

²⁰ 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

²⁰ 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:**

²¹ **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

III. COMMENDATION FOR THEIR CHANGE – VS. 11