

# **“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: ἄρσεν, 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. CONSIDERATION OF THEIR CHANGE – VS. 11**

#### ***A. They needed to put behind them what they used to be – "And such were some of you"***

1. "These things were the *former state* of some among you: but ye are now in a far different state" (Alford).
2. The reference to there some in the church that were in the former state of the things listed is clearly indicative that this particular list is directly related to the sins

the believers in the church had come out of, and perhaps were still struggling with.

3. There may be no greater clause in this letter (at least the first portion of the letter) that gave more hope to the believers in the church in Corinth than this one – they didn't have to live in the sin out of which they were redeemed any longer.

#### Romans 6:17–18

<sup>17</sup> But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

<sup>18</sup> Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

#### Titus 3:3–6

<sup>3</sup> For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.

<sup>4</sup> But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,

<sup>5</sup> Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

<sup>6</sup> Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

[O]r, some of you used to be (LNT). Gr. *ēte*. *Used to be* translates the force of the imperfect tense, representing action that went on in past time. Note that some of the Corinthians *used to be* fornicators, homosexuals, covetous, drunkards, etc. (1

Cor. 6:9-11), but not any longer! They had an experience with God in which they were *made holy, made righteous*. The Christian life consists in a creative act of God which is *transformational, regenerative*, resulting in a new creation! (Cf. 2 Cor. 5:17-18; Gal. 6:15 and notes). And not an *as if* salvation or *imputed* righteousness where one is *considered* to be what one is not, or holiness on the other side of the grave (cf. John 17:17 and notes). The urgency and burden of Paul's point here is that if one is still what they used to be, they will not inherit the kingdom of God! (1 Cor. 6:9-10). If one's experience does not bring transformation and deliverance from sin, it is false to the Scriptures and not saving (cf. Matt. 18:3; Rom. 5:1; Rom. 6:6-7; Rom. 6:14; Rom. 6:22; Eph. 4:24; Eph. 5:3-7; Col. 3:9-10; Titus 2:14; Titus 3:5-7; James 1:26; 1 John 3:7-10). Reader, mark it well, there is no salvation apart from transformation! If you are what you have always been, you are not saved. So Paul's *used to be* statements (1 Cor. 12:2; Rom. 6:17; Rom. 6:20; Rom. 7:5; Eph. 2:3; Eph. 5:8) mean that the one having entered into the new life in Christ has left the sinful past behind—Done! Finished! Over! Paul said in 1 Cor. 12:2 : "...you used to be pagans...led to these mute idols...being led astray." They *used to be*, but not any longer! It is not possible to be a pagan and a Christian at the same time. Paul himself *was (used to be)* "...a blasphemer and persecutor and violent man..." (1 Tim. 1:13), but it was over when he met Jesus on the Damascus road (cf. 1 Tim. 1:15 and note). It may be said of Jesus that He *used to be* in the tomb, but He is not

now! (cf. 1 Cor. 15:17 and note). And so anyone who is a Christian is able to say *it used to be* with reference to the sinful past. It is not possible for one to go through the processes of godly sorrow and come out on the other side of repentance unto salvation, and defend the doctrine of sinning religion (2 Cor. 7:10 and notes) (as found in the UCRT Cross Reference source on this verse)

***B. They needed to put in front of them (always) what they are***

These are not in any particular order but are placed here to simply point out the truth of conversion. This can be seen (at least in part) in how each of these is given as an independent clause, each one encompassing our salvation in a brief, encapsulated way.

1. "But ye are washed"

"But" – in contrast to what they used to be; "Ye" – plural – speaking to the entire church body, especially those in leadership that seem to have been taking advantage of their position.

"Are washed"

a) This verb is aorist (punctiliar action at a particular point in the past) middle (action they took) indicative (presented as an objective fact – something real and definitive). The next two are passive – showing the action was taken upon them, rather than by them. This is important, considering the analogy of baptism here – an action taken by the believer as a first-step in their life for the Lord, and

demonstrative of the work of Christ, in picture, in their lives. (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12)

#### Romans 6:4

<sup>4</sup> Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

#### Colossians 2:12

<sup>12</sup> Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

- b) There are many that teach this along with a couple verses in Acts, Titus, and 1 Peter, as being baptismal regeneration – that is, water baptism is essential to, and a condition of, salvation.
- c) The only other time this word for “washed” (ἀπολούω) is used is in Acts 22:16 where it is given as “wash away.”

#### Acts 22:16

<sup>16</sup> And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

- d) In that reference, it seems, in most English Bibles, that the washing is accomplished by baptism, and that calling on the name of the Lord is done either along with, or after, the baptism – making baptism what washes our sins away.
- e) Neither this verse, nor the ones in Acts, nor any other of the texts, teach that.
- f) In Acts 22:16, the grammatical word order

puts the phrase "wash away your sins" after the final phrase, "calling on the name of the Lord." And the verb "calling" is in a tense that it would read "having called" – showing that the baptism is to follow, and is subsequent to, believing ("calling") on Christ.

- g) The following is from the website "Got Questions" and is one of the best explanations of this issue I have read (<https://www.gotquestions.org/baptism-Acts-22-16.html>):

*(1) Paul tells that he did not receive or hear the Gospel from Ananias, but rather he heard it directly from Christ. Galatians 1:11-12 says, "For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ." So, Paul heard and believed in Christ on the road to Damascus. Paul had already believed in Christ when Ananias came to pray for him to receive his sight (Acts 9:17) [and remember that is belief in the work of Christ that saves – that is found in an overwhelming number of Scriptures].*

*(2) It also should be noted that Paul at that time when Ananias prayed for him to receive his sight that he also received the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17) -- this was before he was baptized (Acts 9:18). Acts presents a transition period where God's focus turns from Israel to the Church. The events recorded in Acts are not always normative. With regard to receiving the Holy Spirit, the norm is*

*that a person receives and is permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation.*

- (3) The Greek aorist participle, epikalesamenos, translated "calling on His name" refers either to action that is simultaneous with or before that of the main verb, "be baptized." Here Paul's calling on Christ's name for salvation preceded his water baptism. The participle may be translated "having called on His name" which makes more sense, as it would clearly indicate the order of the events.*
  - (4) Concerning the words, "be baptized, and wash away your sins," because Paul was already cleansed spiritually at the time Christ appeared to him, these words must refer to the symbolism of baptism. Baptism is a picture of God's inner work of washing away sin (1 Corinthians 6:11; 1 Peter 3:21).*
  - (5) It is also interesting that when Paul recounted this event again later in Acts (Acts 26:12-18), he did not mention Ananias or what Ananias said to him at all. Verse 18 again would confirm the idea that Paul received Christ as Savior on the road to Damascus since here Christ is telling Paul he will be a messenger for Him concerning forgiveness of sins for Gentiles as they have faith in Him. It would seem unlikely that Christ would commission Paul if Paul had not yet believed in Him.*
- h) All this word "washed" means in the text in 1 Corinthians 6 is that it shows that our sins are gone (baptism, in Acts 22, being the*

picture used to demonstrate this) – washed away by the blood of Christ.

#### Psalm 51:2

<sup>2</sup> Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. [the word for “wash” here in the Septuagint is the root of the word for “washed” in 1 Cor. 6:11]

#### Psalm 51:7

<sup>7</sup> Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

#### Ephesians 5:26

<sup>26</sup> That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

#### Titus 3:5

<sup>5</sup> Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

#### Hebrews 10:22 [read verses 19-25]

<sup>22</sup> Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

- i) There is another text in 1 Peter 3:21 that is pointed to by those that teach baptismal regeneration as a proof-text for their belief.

#### 1 Peter 3:21 [read verses 18-22]

<sup>21</sup> The like figure [literally, antitype or counterpart] whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

So, what does this mean?

Dr. Kenneth Wuest gives a great explanation of this text:

"Water baptism is clearly in the apostle's mind, not the baptism by the Holy Spirit, for he speaks of the waters of the flood as saving the inmates of the ark, and in this verse, of baptism saving believers. But he says that it saves them only as a counterpart. That is, water baptism is the counterpart of the reality, salvation. It can only save as a counterpart, not actually. The Old Testament sacrifices were counterparts of the reality, the Lord Jesus. They did not actually save the believer, only in type. It is not argued here that these sacrifices are analogous to Christian water baptism. The author is merely using them as an illustration of the use of the word 'counterpart.'

"So water baptism only saves the believer in type. The Old Testament Jew was saved before he brought the offering. That offering was only his outward testimony that he was placing faith in the Lamb of God of whom these sacrifices were a type....Water baptism is the outward testimony of the believer's inward faith. The person is saved the moment he places his faith in the Lord Jesus. Water baptism is the visible testimony to his faith and the salvation he was given in answer to that faith. Peter is careful to inform his readers that he is not teaching baptismal regeneration, namely, that a person who submits to baptism is thereby regenerated, for he says, 'not the putting away of the filth of the flesh.' Baptism, Peter explains, does not wash away the filth of the flesh,

either in a literal sense as a bath for the body, nor in a metaphorical sense as a cleansing for the soul. No ceremonies really affect the conscience. But he defines what he means by salvation, in the words 'the answer of a good conscience toward God,' and he explains how this is accomplished, namely, 'by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,' in that the believing sinner is identified with Him in that resurrection."

- j) One thing to keep in mind – the Bible cannot contradict itself. If the preponderance of evidence, and the clear teaching of Scripture is that salvation is by grace, and grace alone, as given in Ephesians (2:8-9), the book given to give the doctrinal positions for the church age, then this passage, and the one in Acts, cannot teach baptism is essential for salvation.
- k) All that said, keep in mind that baptism is the first step we are to take, after salvation, in our walk with the Lord. It is to be an immediate response, to demonstrate what has happened in our life.

## 2. "But ye are sanctified"

Following is what I gave on this word in 1:2, early in our study of the book of First Corinthians:

- a) The word "sanctify" means to make clean, render pure – to make one holy
- b) It is seen here that the "sanctifying" is done because of the work of Christ ("in" – resting in) – He is the one that made the believer pure and clean through His work on the cross, and this is done through the ministry

of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Word of God

- c) As a doctrinal position, we believe that sanctification is wholly the work of God by which He sets apart the believer unto Himself (initial sanctification). Once saved, the believer's position as seen by God is holy and blameless in Christ. Then, walking with the Lord, encountering the trials of life and of the flesh, the believer is continuously sanctified unto holy living (progressive sanctification). God completes and makes final the believer's sanctification when Christ takes us to be with Him (final sanctification).

Practically, the individual believer must constantly yield his life, confessing sin and consecrating himself to God as the Holy Spirit uses the Word to convict of areas needing the grace of God in sanctification. The daily living of believers thus yielding to God separates them from entanglement with worldly activities. This testimony to God's work is evident to believers and unbelievers alike.

#### 2 Timothy 2:4

<sup>4</sup> No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

#### 1 Thessalonians 5:23

<sup>23</sup> And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

#### 1 Thessalonians 4:3

<sup>3</sup> For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:

3. "But ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God"
  - a) This point actually clarifies the others, specifically that of being "washed" – if our justification is in the name of the Lord Jesus, then baptism (or any work we can do) can play no part in it.
  - b) The doctrine of justification, theologically, can be described simply as "that act of God by which, on account of Christ, to whom the sinner is united by faith, He declares a sinner to be no longer under condemnation, but to have a standing of righteousness before Him" (Bancroft).
  - c) Scripturally, the doctrine of justification is not seen as making a person righteous, but rather is seen as declaring "him just, or free from guilt and exposure to punishment" (Bancroft).
  - d) Believers can stand before the very throne of God itself perfect, without sin, because of what Jesus did on the cross. When He died and paid the price for man's sin, He satisfied the requirements that God had set, and justified regenerate man, removing the penalty of sin and making him perfect in the site of God! All this is accomplished in a person's life by grace through faith, not by works. All that must be done is to accept the payment made by faith (repentance being part of the gift of faith), and grace is imparted, and salvation is secured.

## Galatians 2:16-17

**16** Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

**17** But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.

Conclusion: The last phrase of verse eleven gives the clear conclusion – “Ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” It is through the redemptive work of Christ on the cross that the believers in the church at Corinth were able to stand before God as justified in His sight. The whole of the context before this was to show that they were NOT living as if they were, and they needed to.

When the world sees the church today, when they see us, as individual believers, representing the church as the body of Christ, how are we at presenting a testimony of a righteous standing with the Lord?

When native converts of the island of Madagascar used to present themselves for baptism, it was often asked of them, “What first led you to think of becoming Christians?” The answer usually was that the changed conduct of others who had become Christians was what first arrested their attention.

“I knew this man to be a thief; that one was a drunkard; another was very cruel and unkind to his family. Now they are all

changed. The thief is an honest man; the drunkard is sober and respectable; and the other is gentle and kind in his home. There must be something in a religion that can work such changes.” The converts would say.

Source: The Biblical Museum, Volume II, James Comper Gray