

1 Corinthians 6:1-11

"Washed, Sanctified And Justified"

The church today seems to have so many problems, we can easily become disillusioned. We wonder where things went wrong. – I mean, you read the book of Acts & you think, "Man, they really had their 'act' together. ☺ Things were happening, miracles were taking place, God's power was on the loose, what a glorious time! If we could only be like *they* were." – & It's certainly true that we read of glorious things taking place in those early years, the foundational years of the church... But I'd like to remind you that what we have in the book of Acts, though the record is accurate, in & of itself it's incomplete. If you want a more accurate picture of the early church, then you really need to read the *entirety* of the N.T. epistles (& you might ought to throw in Ch's 2-3 of the book of Rev. as well).

What you'll discover is that much like the church today, the church then had its fair share of struggles, of problems, of sinful situations that needed dealt with. We're not as far off as one might imagine. My suspicion is that's because though times, places, customs & cultures change, human nature... the human heart remains the same.

As we slide into Ch 6 we're exploring the same *subject*: that of judgment. But Paul broaches a different *topic*... Basically when it came to confronting wrong & settling issues scripturally, the Corinthian Christians were simply showing laxity, leniency, an indifference toward their responsibility to the body. – Paul moves from *morality* (though he'll continue to confront it along the way) into *legality*.

Vs 1

I tell ya; when it came to these Corinthian Christians Paul certainly had his hands full. Now, I have zero doubt that he *never* regretted preaching the gospel in Corinth. Jesus didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (& we thank God for that). At the same time, for a group of people who considered themselves so wise, so spiritual, so "having it all together" w/in the context of Christianity... I'm not sure that a more problematic church is presented throughout all the N.T. ☺

The wording of this 1st phrase in Ch 6 is such to the extent that Paul's mind is simply blown as he moves from one topic to the next. Like, "I can't believe I'm actually having to even *address* these things!" He says, "Dare any of you!" You know, "*How dare you do this!*" & Just to be clear, he wasn't angry in the sense of being fleshly mad. But he was angry in the sense of, "What you're doing is *interfering with* & diminishing the Lord's glory!"

Now listen, I'm just going to go ahead & let the cat out of the bag here.

The point that Paul is going to develop here is that *God's glory & the cause of His kingdom* is greater & (quite frankly) *more important* than our rights. I know that can offend our American ears, but we need to let that soak in.

Evidently there was a Christian in the congregation who believed he'd been wronged by another & decided to take the man to court to seek justice & have the matter settled. He, "went to law" before the unrighteous.

& As to where Jewish legal matters were taken to the gates of the city. Greek culture held court right in the heart of the marketplace. The local judge sat in what was known as the "bema" seat (judgment seat) of the civil magistrate. Now, we've already developed the fact that entertainment in the ancient world was quite different than it is today. They weren't streaming movies, they weren't watching their favorite stocks track up & down, they weren't on social media... They would catch a sporting event or listen to a public speaker... or catch a court case down at the city market. – Because of that, people's legal troubles quickly became public knowledge. & When 2 *Christians* were battling each other in the legal system, man, it spread like wildfire!

I know it seems quite shocking to some of you (☺) but this wasn't just a problem in the early church. Still today, there are times when Christians have problems w/one another... Perhaps there's some sort of construction going on. One man is building a house for another man in the church. The contracts are put in place & the project begins. But somewhere along the way there's a dispute. One says, "You owe me for that job!" The other says, "You didn't do it right so I'm not paying till it's fixed!" The other says, "It may not be exactly what you wanted, but it's exactly what I said I'd do, pay up!" & On & on it goes... Until one says to the other, "I'm done w/this, I'll see you in court!"

I don't know if that's what was happening here, but for the sake of the principle in play, let's presume it was something along those lines. & Paul says, "What are you thinking taking this case before the ungodly?" When he says, "unrighteous", more literally it's "unjust". Not in the sense of a secular judge doesn't have a moral barometer or that he's a bad person per say... He's speaking in the sense of the fact that he's not justified before God, it's a secular justice system. The concept is this, "Why in the world would you seek justice in the presence of the unjust?"

Of course, I should point out that this doesn't forbid Christians from ever seeking legal help. Paul himself, in the book of Acts felt as though he wasn't getting a fair shake (& he wasn't) so he appealed to Caesar.

& He points out in Romans 13 that as it pertains to *criminal* cases. The state or federal court is where they belong. But pertaining to *civil matters*, believers should work those out amongst themselves or in the presence of other objective, God fearing believers.

Why? He'll give us a # of reasons. But let me say this as well. As I already mentioned, it's a horrible witness to the world when 2 believers can't settle an issue between themselves. People begin to mock Christianity saying things like, "I thought Jesus said you were to love one another? That people would know you were His by your love for each other... Didn't He say, 'love your enemies'? How are you going to do that if you can't even get along w/each other?" So, it diminishes your witness & your ministry to the unbelieving.

But something else you need to bear in mind is what Paul wrote earlier. He said, *"...the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things,"*¹ In other words, you can't really hope for a godly outcome from an ungodly individual. I'm not saying they'll never give a correct verdict. **I'm saying that there is a basic understanding of the heart of God & the word of God that resides in the believer that doesn't reside in the unbeliever. & As believers we want the heart of God & the word of God at work in a situation whereby there's been a violation.**

Why else should we trust the saints (or the believers) to help us in a civil matter?

Vs 2-6

Again, let's not lose sight of the fact that the Corinthians prided themselves on their *wisdom*. Paul is really showing them their *lack* of wisdom. He says, "How is it that you don't have so much as 1 wise man who can arbitrate or mediate this situation? You have all these gifts of the Spirit, all this spiritual insight, all this understanding, yet you can't mediate a disagreement?"

He says, **"Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?"** The idea is, **"If you're going to be given a throne; if you're going to be a part of God's governing system in His millennial kingdom, you might want to figure out how to mediate these comparatively menial matters."**

It's a fairly mind-blowing fact that the bible teaches. That you & me, that we will somehow & in some way arbitrate & mediate in the millennial kingdom of God. & Time forbids us to go into detail on the topic (Paul just states it as a passing point of fact here).

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [1 Co 2:14-15]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But more than one passage in the bible points to that fact. People who survive the Great Tribulation will go on into the millennial kingdom of Christ. The earth will begin to repopulate & we will (in some capacity) maintain & enforce righteousness upon the earth as emissaries or ambassadors of Christ. We read in Rev 5, where the saints break out in praise to Jesus saying, *"You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."*² Note, we "shall". We aren't *presently*, but we will *eventually*. It's going to happen. So if we're going to judge the world, we should be able to mediate comparatively small matters.

& If that's not mind-blowing enough for you. Not only will you judge the world, you'll judge angels as well! Vs 3, "Do you not know that we shall judge angels?" What does *that* look like? The bible doesn't say. However, I think we're *safe* to say that it doesn't mean you'll judge the *faithful* angels of God. You're probably not going to review the work of your guardian angel & ask him where he was when you fell out of your treehouse that day & give him some sort of demerit for that 😊.

I believe the angels in view here are *fallen* angels. Demonic beings. Those who didn't need faith to believe in God. They dwelt in the very presence of God. Witnessed the creation of the heavens & the earth & yet chose to rebel against Him, thinking perhaps that they could even somehow dethrone Him & throughout human history have sought not only to mar creation but drag as many of those whom God has created in His image directly to hell.

You know; the destiny of redeemed men & women; the reality of us one day being higher than the angels (sitting in judgment over them) though we were initially created a little lower than the angels (in that we're subject to death) must be a real sore spot to at least one particular angel...

Sometimes we wonder don't we? What exactly happened to cause Lucifer (also known as Satan or the devil) to want to rebel against God & against His plan. It's complete conjecture on my part, but perhaps at least in part, it was for this reason. How fascinating it must've been to witness the creation of the world. & There's no way of knowing exactly when God shared, or how He revealed His plan to the angels. But at some point it was made plain. God would create a being... in His own image.

² [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Re 5:9-10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But it would be sort of an amphibious or strange multi-dimensional type being. Again, created a little *lower* than the angels, capable of dying... yet would be served *by* the angels. The author of Hebrews tells us that angels are, “... *all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation...*”³. This creature would be a physical being, yet have an eternal spirit. He would dwell in the physical realm, but one day enter into the spiritual realm to live forever w/God. Still being under God (obviously) but over the angels.

Perhaps Lucifer didn't like that plan, didn't want to serve this lowly/inferior creature & certainly didn't want to see this creature known as “man” being raised up higher than him... Starting lower, being raised up higher. So he rebelled against God... I don't know. But what I do know is that every person he deceives. Every person who leaves this planet apart from J.C. is one more person w/whom he can have the perverse pleasure of knowing that they will never sit in judgment over him...

Be that as it may; Paul is pounding home the point. If you're going to reign (ultimately), if you're going to judge the world & even angelic beings... Isn't there even 1 man among you who can settle this small matter (comparatively)? Kind of brings things into perspective doesn't it? – A *secular* court has no *spiritual* discernment. You'd be better off to go to the poorest equipped believer who at least seeks the counsel of God's word & the leading of God's Spirit!

Vs 7

You see? What's more important (ultimately/eternally) your “rights” personally, or the greatness of God's glory? Paul says, “In taking this matter before a secular system, parading your inability to reconcile an issue, you've already lost, even if you win.” Think about that... In taking another brother or sister to court, no one wins. *The verdict may fall your way, but from an eternal perspective... As it pertains to your ability to minister fruitfully or maintain a good testimony to those outside the body... you've lost way more than you gained.*

It's a hard life lesson. But from an eternal perspective the bible teaches us that concerning our dealings w/other believers, it's better to simply absorb the wrong & trust the Lord to make it right either in the here & now or when we stand before Him. It's a “turn the other cheek”, “go the extra mile” kind of principle in play. – Those things that sound so good, so spiritual when I'm sitting in a Bible study, but are so hard when it's taking place in my life.

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Heb 1:14) Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

The proverbs put it this way, *“Do not say, ‘I will recompense evil’; Wait for the Lord, and He will save you.”*⁴ Paul said that like this, *“Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.”*⁵ One more from the apostle Peter, *“For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.”*⁶ & He points to Jesus who did no wrong, had no sin, yet endured wrong toward Him, commending Himself to God who judges righteously.

So, we’re to think of God’s glory & the cause of His kingdom over & above our “rights” or what’s “owed” to us. – Now, that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t confront the issue (we very much should). It doesn’t mean we shouldn’t seek to settle things justly. He’s simply saying that in the case of 2 believers, seek godly mediation/arbitration. But even if the church fails to settle the dispute, trust the Lord. No one who accepts wrong for the sake of God’s glory will lose in the end. God will one day right every wrong. Think of it like this (though it’s hard, I know). Better to suffer loss financially than it is to lose spiritually.

However, such was not the case in the Corinthian congregation.

Vs 8-11

Listen, there is no place in Christian businesses for dishonest dealings. Before God you’re to pay your bills, charge a fair rate; don’t drag things out, don’t rip people off, pay your taxes & don’t cheat the system. How many people have rejected the faith & the fellowship of the saints due to dishonest dealings & being cheated by Christian businesses? Yet, for as much as there is no place for dishonest dealings *by* Christians, how much is there such a place *among* Christians.

Maybe this guy was thinking. “I don’t know, maybe it wasn’t the best thing to do, but it wasn’t like it was some horrible atrocity.” Paul shares w/them the sobering reality. “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?”

He’s saying to the offender, “You obviously don’t you realize how serious your sin is? The only thing you may ‘gain’ from cheating your brother through these ungodly dealings is eternity with the ungodly!”

Of course, he wasn’t saying that the man wasn’t saved (he says in Vs 8 that he’s among the brethren); however, our faith is also made manifest in our works, isn’t it?

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Pr 20:22). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ro 12:17–20). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁶ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (1 Pe 2:19). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

James said it like this, **“Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”**⁷ The question to consider is this; if one can cheat & defraud a brother & have no heart to make it right or repent, is that person’s faith even genuine? Do they really know the Lord?

What does Paul say? He says, “Do not be deceived.” How many people have deceived themselves into thinking that they’re the exception? That they can do what the bible says no one else can do, but they’ll still go to heaven because God has somehow given them immunity. Paul is saying, “It doesn’t work like that.” - If the *Son of God* was *separated from God - because of our sin* - what makes you think that we can *live in sin* & still be ok w/God?

We might even go as far as to say that a pattern of unrighteous works is indicative of an unrighteous heart... The person claiming to be a Christian, yet living a lifestyle that is characterized by one or more of these kinds of things may *say* one thing, but their life *shows* quite the opposite. These are the kinds of things that Paul called (Gal. 5) the “works of the flesh.”

Having said that, I should also say this: to fall prey to one or more of these sins isn’t automatic exclusion from the kingdom of God. When Paul lists these things, the reference isn’t to an isolated occasion whereby someone got caught up in something they regret, they repent of & want to lead their lives set apart to God. The reference is to an individual whose life is characterized & dominated by sins of this sort. – Of course I should *also say this*; that’s not to say the occasional act or indulging in these kinds of things is ok. #1 These things go against everything you are & all that you’ve been given in Christ. #2 A lifestyle of sin begins w/a single or occasional occurrence. Let’s not try to skate along the edge of “how much can I sin & still be saved?” But rather, “how close to Christ can I get in this life?”

But notice, extortion (ripping people off), reviling (character assassination), greedy for gain... they’re right there on the list beside fornication, adultery, homosexuality.

Let me also point *this* out. Paul was not writing to a “homophobic” culture. Homosexuality was rampant in the ancient world. 14 of the 1st 15 Roman Emperors were either bi-sexual or homosexual.

Nero, who was Emperor when Paul was writing this, had a young boy castrated & married him, making him his wife. Later on, he lived w/another man & was declared to be *his* wife. –

⁷ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Jas 2:18]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

& I know that homosexuality is really becoming more & more popular & accepted & even encouraged today. I know a lot of churches & pastors have gone out of their way to try & write scholarly sounding articles that somehow show that the Bible really has nothing negative to say about homosexuality & in fact supports it between 2 loving consenting adults. So they'll marry homosexual couples, they'll ordain them as ministers...

Listen, I've just got to tell you as sincerely & as sensitively as I can. The Bible clearly condemns homosexuality (as it does any other sin). People will say things like, "Well, in the Greek the word speaks of male prostitution, or pedophilia." & It's true that this word "homosexuals" can be taken that way & does include those things. However, the next word, "Sodomites" speaks very clearly of a male who lies w/another male as a female. The 1st word can also speak of the effeminate male (the passive role) & the word "sodomite" speaks of the active role... Family; the context is clear, any act of homosexuality is clearly condemned scripturally. – & Those who would tell you differently simply aren't cutting the text squarely nor do they take into account the totality of the counsel of God's word contextually. They're not dividing the word of truth "rightly". **(Closing)**

But as I said, homosexuality isn't on some kind of "worse than any other sin" list. It's right there w/extortion & reviling. If you're a fornicator, or a drunkard you're on the same list... So we can't excuse it, but nor can we single it out as something God is particularly offended by above & beyond all other sin.

On top of that we need to remember; & such were some of you (right). None of us were born free from sin. We *all sin* & fall short of the glory of God... But in His grace God has done a great work in your life ☺! He has saved us from our sins in Christ Jesus.

You were *washed* clean by the blood of J.C., you were *sanctified* (set apart to be used by God that you might bring glory to God) You were *justified*, declared innocent in the sight of God, "just as if I'd never sinned". Our obligation is to God, our bodies are to be used for His glory, not fleshly gratification.

You've gone from Vs 9-10 into Vs 11. Not by any great effort or work of your own. But through the name of the Lord Jesus & by the Spirit of our God. & If your life is currently defined by those kinds of things, you can be washed today, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus & by the Spirit of our God. Believe on the Lord J.C. you'll be cleansed of your sin & find new life in Him...

Prayer Points:

God we thank You that You love us & that You speak clearly *to* us. We want our lives to honor You. We're asking for hearts of repentance toward you & reconciliation toward one another. Be glorified in us.

God loves you. Jesus laid down His life for you, that in Him you might have eternal life. Surrender to Him today, whole heartedly, unconditionally, call upon Him & you will be saved.