

1 Corinthians 6:9-11
Ezekiel 18
Psalm 96

“Such Were Some of You”

April 6, 2014

Ezekiel 18 describes what it means to be righteous.

If a man is righteous, he does what is just and right.

In other words, he refrains from idolatry,

from sexual immorality,

and he conducts himself with integrity and compassion in his economic dealings.

So the proper exercise of worship, sex, and money

is at the heart of what the righteous are all about.

But Ezekiel 18 also describes the unrighteous.

Here Ezekiel adds the language of bloodshed –

but otherwise focuses on worship, sex, and money.

But Ezekiel goes on to say that “righteous” and “wicked” are not fixed categories.

The righteous can become wicked if he starts doing wicked things.

And the wicked can become righteous if he turns from his sins

and does what is just and right.

God tells Ezekiel that righteousness is fundamentally about three things:

who you worship,

how you engage in sexual relations,

and how you relate to others in your economic dealings.

And God says that he will judge his people according to how they have lived.

‘I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways.’”

Psalm 96 reminds us that God is a just and faithful judge.

C. S. Lewis rightly points out that once upon a time we used to realize that God is judge –
and someday we must answer to him.

To use the British term – *we* are in the dock awaiting trial.

But now, we (moderns) have become the judge –

and God is in the dock awaiting our sentence.

Is the Triune God of the Bible the sort of deity we want to worship?

Psalm 96 calls us to reject that way of thinking!

“Make all the nations know God reigns forever;

earth is established as he did decree.

Righteous and just is the king of the nations,

judging the peoples with equity.”

Sing Psalm 96

Read 1 Corinthians 6

Tomorrow marks the 20th anniversary of the beginning of the Rwandan genocide.
If someone had killed your whole family and burned down your house,
and then came to you, rebuilt your house, and asked for your forgiveness,
what would you say?
I read a story about a woman whose husband and children were all killed.
She returned to her village.
When one of the men who killed her children came and asked for forgiveness,
she said, “But who will take care of me in their place.”
He said, “I will.”

As one pastor said it so well –
“Will you forgive, and join the repentant murderers in heaven?
Or will you refuse to forgive, and join the unrepentant ones in hell?”

“And such were some of you.”
Yes, God is just.
Yes, God will render to each one according to his works.
And so yes, if you have failed to live according to God’s standard,
then you deserve death.

But even if you were sexually immoral – even if you were an adulterer –
even if you were a practicing homosexual –
even if you were a thief or a swindler –
even if you were a drunkard –
even if you participated in a genocide –
God will have mercy on all those who repent and believe in Jesus.

“Such were some of you.”

Paul’s point is that you *were* such – but that’s not you anymore.
These things are inconsistent with the Christian life.
You are God’s children.
If you want to inherit God’s kingdom,
then you need to live in a manner that is consistent with that kingdom.

1. Inheriting the Kingdom: Why Use the Language of *Inheritance*? (v9a)

⁹ *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?*

Who are the unrighteous?

As we saw last time,
the unrighteous are those who *wrong* their brothers –
those who do *unjust* things to one another.
After all, verse 8 says that the Corinthians
have been “wronging” and “defrauding” their own brothers.
And now, Paul uses the same word to say “the unrighteous” – “those who do wrong” –
will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Paul's focus here is on *outward actions*.

Your inward disposition is important!

After all, your outward actions will flow from your inward disposition!

A bad tree cannot produce good fruit.

But here Paul is looking at fruit.

The unrighteous are those who *do* bad things.

Those who *practice* evil – those who are characterized by wrongdoing –
will not inherit the kingdom of God.

And the reason is simple:

God's heirs must resemble him.

God created Adam and Eve in his own image and likeness.

Adam and Eve resembled God – both physically and morally.

God sees all things – so he gave us eyes so that we could see some things.

God knows all things – so he gave us minds so that we could know some things.

God made all things – so he gave us hands so that we could make some things.

God has always existed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit –

love and communication have always existed within the Triune God –

and so he created us to love and communicate –

both with him and with each other.

And just as God rules over all things – so he placed *part* of his creation under us –
so that we might rule some things.

In other words, Adam was created as God's *heir* – as a son of God who was to reflect God.

Indeed, you can tell the whole history of the OT as a history of the Son of God.

Paul does this in Galatians 4.

But Moses did it first –

when he said that God told Abraham to leave his father's house –

and go to a land that I will show you –

a land which God would give Abraham as *an inheritance*.

And when God called Israel out of Egypt, he said to Pharaoh,

“Israel is my son, my firstborn, let my son go that he may serve me.”

And all through the OT, the Promised Land is referred to as Israel's “inheritance.”

The Promised Land is compared to the Garden of Eden –

and the land of Israel is supposed to be the place

where the kingdom of God begins to take root on earth.

Israel is called to become what Adam failed to be.

But of course, Israel failed.

In the era of the Judges, Israel became *unrighteous*.

They did *wrong* to one another – and worshiped other gods –

and so God brought judgment upon Israel.

And so, in the days of Samuel, God established his Kingdom in a new way.
When Saul fell short – and turned to *unrighteous* ways –
God established David as his king –
and more importantly, God adopted David's son as his own.
From David onward,
the kingdom of God would be forever associated with the house of David.

But of course, the house of David failed.
In the era of the Kings, even the line of David became *unrighteous*.
Jerusalem was captured, the temple destroyed –
and the people of God sent into exile –
why?

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?

Only the righteous – only those who *do* what is right –
will inherit the kingdom of God.

The problem is that all humanity has become unrighteous.
As Paul will say in Romans 3, “there is none righteous, not even one”!

The whole history of the OT – the whole history of the OT people of God –
demonstrates that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God!

But this is why Jesus came.
Jesus is the heir – the Son of God.
And a son looks like his Father.
Jesus has shown us the Father.

As Paul will say in Galatians 3:26-29
“for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith.
For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.
There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free,
there is no male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.”

The unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God.
But, as Paul states so clearly in Galatians 3 – we have been justified by faith –
we have now received a righteousness that is by faith –
and not by works of the law.
Now we have become heirs with Christ.

Paul's point to the Corinthians is that if we have become heirs with Christ –
if we are now sons of God –
then we *must* resemble Christ!

Only a transformed humanity can inherit the kingdom of God.
If we are characterized by sexual immorality (chapter 5),
or greed (chapter 6),
so that we are wronging and defrauding one another –
whether sexually or economically –
then we are not acting like children of God –
and we will not inherit God’s kingdom.

As Paul will say in verse 11,
we must be cleansed – both sanctified and justified

2. Sex and Money: the Corruption of Creation Cannot Inherit the Kingdom (v9b-10)

Do not be deceived:

*neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers,
nor men who practice homosexuality,
¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers
will inherit the kingdom of God.*

In Paul’s list in verses 9-10, it might seem odd that “murderers” are not included.
Surely murderers will not inherit the kingdom of God!
Why does Paul focus on this particular list?

Over the last couple weeks, I’ve pointed out that Paul is using sexual immorality and greed
in order to focus on our *creational* callings
to make babies and to make stuff.

Because at the root of Paul’s sexual and economic ethic
is his understanding of creation, fall, and redemption.
The same history of the son of God at the heart of his idea of inheritance
is also at the heart of his sexual and economic ethics.

When God created Adam and Eve, he called them to be fruitful and multiply (make babies),
and he called them to have dominion – to tend and to guard (make stuff).

Our problem is that sin has corrupted our baby making and our stuff making.

Paul starts with five words associated with sexual ethics:

he starts with the most general:

“pornoι” – the sexually immoral – which can cover any sexual sin;
idolaters – those who worship idols –
this might seem odd in a list of sexual sins,
but the prophets regularly connected adultery and idolatry –
as *unfaithfulness* to God;
adulterers – adultery includes at least one married person
and then come two words which refer to homosexual relations.

The ESV has chosen to render these two words: “men who practice homosexuality,”

but in Greek, there are actually two words here:

malakoi – which means “soft” –

but in this context refers to the passive partner in a homosexual encounter;

arsenokoitai – which means “he who lies with a man” –

and in this context suggests the active partner in a homosexual encounter.

This is the first use of *arsenokoitai* in Greek,
so probably no one had used it before Paul.

There are plenty of Greek words that Paul could have used – but didn’t.

Instead, he created compound word “he who lies sexually with a man,”

a decision that very closely follows the LXX,

which uses both *arsenos* and *koiten*

in the condemnation of homosexual relations both in Lev. 18:22 and 20:13.

Paul simply takes the two words “to lie sexually” and “with a man”

and merges them into one word.

I want you to realize what Paul is doing.

By distinguishing between the active and passive partners,

Paul is condemning any *willing* participation in a homosexual relationship.

In other words, Paul is saying that God’s prohibition against homosexual relations,

first formulated in the days of Moses,

still applies to the Greco-Roman world (with its very different context).

Some people have claimed that Paul only knew of abusive homosexual relationships,
but that is probably not true.

All you have to do is read Plutarch (a near contemporary of Paul),

to see that the Greco-Roman world included all sorts of sexual relationships –
some abusive – some not.

But even more, the claim that Paul didn’t know about “loving” homosexual relationships
is missing the point.

Because Paul is restating the Mosaic condemnation of *all* sexual relations
outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.

I think I prefer Paul’s phrase, “he who lies sexually with a man”

to the ambiguous term “homosexual” –

because I don’t like the way in which “homosexual” and “heterosexual”

focus us around our “sexual orientation.”

Paul is not interested in the question of “sexual orientation” –

he is interested in the question of sexual *practice*.

Rosaria Butterfield is a former lesbian professor of queer theory –
who is now a Reformed pastor’s wife.

She points out three dangerous views that many Christians have bought into:

First, the Freudian view that “same-sex attraction is a morally neutral and fixed part of the personal makeup and identity of some, that some are “gay Christians” and others are not.”

Butterfield warns us not to “create an identity” out of a pattern of temptation. There is no more of a “homosexual orientation” than there is a “greed orientation” or an “orientation to adultery.” As Paul will say – “such *were* some of you.”

Maybe you were a drunkard –
but in Christ, that’s not you anymore!
Sin has a tendency to fragment myself into little pieces.
What God does in Jesus is to put us back together again –
so that we might be made *whole!*

Butterfield also warns against the revisionist view that tries to make same sex sexual relations okay. But God says that they are not!

She also objects to those who think that the way to resolve homosexuality is by “reparative therapy” whereby the homosexual becomes a heterosexual. She points out that the *goal* is not to make temptation go away! That is simply another version of the prosperity gospel – name it and claim it!

Temptation toward sexual immorality, greed, drunkenness does not go away!

But that’s where the Puritans are so helpful,
as Butterfield puts it:

“The Puritans didn't live in a world more pure than ours,
but they helped create one that valued biblical literacy.

[Owen's work on indwelling sin](#) is the most liberating balm
to someone who feels owned by sexual sin.

You are what (and how) you read.

J. C. Ryle said it takes the whole Bible to make a whole Christian.

Why does sin lurk in the minds of believers as a law, demanding to be obeyed?

How do we have victory if sin's tentacles go so deep,
if Satan knows our names and addresses?

We stand on the ordinary means of grace: Scripture reading, prayer, worship, and the sacraments.

We embrace the covenant of church membership for real accountability and community,
knowing that left to our own devices we'll either be led astray

or become a danger to those we love most.

We read our Bibles daily and in great chunks.

We surround ourselves with a great cloud of witnesses
who don't fall prey to the same worldview snares
we and our post-19th century cohorts do.”

<http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2014/02/14/you-are-whatand-howyou-read/>

If all you do is read blogs and contemporary authors,
then you are likely going to wind up enamored of modern ways of thinking!
But if you read the scriptures – and wise and faithful Christians from all ages –
then you will be more likely to see modern folly for what it is.

And that's true for our business ethics as well as for our sexual ethics.
In verse 10, Paul lays out five examples of unrighteousness in our “stuff-making”:

“thieves” – those who steal –
“the greedy” – as we saw over the last couple weeks,
the greedy are those who not only *covet* the possession of others,
but who actively seek to acquire them unjustly –
“drunkards” – the drunkard squanders his wealth and spends it foolishly,
obsessed with his own pleasure –
“revilers” – the verbally abusive
Like the drunkard, the reviler is one who doesn't care about others.
The reviler uses words to control others –
the drunkard uses alcohol to control others.
Both are utterly inconsistent with love for God and others –
“swindlers” – those who plunder others.

The righteous work diligently and profitably –
and then use their goods to benefit others.

The common feature in all of these economic sins
is the selfishness of the unrighteous who seeks only his own pleasure and benefit,
and harms others in the process.

Does your economic activity benefit others?
Or harm others?

Paul focus on these two basic parts of our life –
sex and money –
in his description of “the unrighteous” in verses 9-10.

But then he turns to the Corinthians and says:

3. But That's Not You Anymore: Our Trinitarian Salvation (v11)

¹¹ *And such were some of you.*

Remember – that’s where *you* were!

But the glorious thing is that *in Christ Jesus* –
you are no longer who you once were:

*But you were washed, you were sanctified,
you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ
and by the Spirit of our God.*

You were washed.

Paul’s not just saying, “you were baptized” –
“you were washed” includes everything that baptism represents!
he’s saying, you have been cleansed from your sins –
from your old way of life.

You were sanctified – you were justified!

Why does Paul put sanctification before justification?
After all, in 1:30, Paul says,
“you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God,
righteousness and sanctification and redemption.”
Why does Paul now say, “you were sanctified, you were justified”?

I think that it is safe to say that Paul is not talking about our “ongoing” sanctification here.
Paul says you *were* sanctified.

Not “you are being sanctified” –
Paul makes it clear that he is referring to a definitive, once-for-all act of God.
You were sanctified!

You were set apart by God as holy.

We usually think of sanctification as a process.

But Paul teaches us that there is a part of our sanctification that is definitive, once-for-all.
Paul looks at this messed up church in Corinth that still needs *a lot* of growth in grace –
and he says, *you were sanctified!*

In your inner man, you are no longer who you once were.

The old man is dead.

Your old identity is gone.

Maybe you *were* a homosexual.

Maybe you *were* an adulterer.

Maybe you *were* a drunkard.

Maybe you *were* verbally abusive (a reviler).

But you were *washed* – you were *sanctified*.

You were justified.

You have been declared righteous by God, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Justification has to do with our legal standing before God.

Our legal problem is that we are unrighteous – we are “unjust” – before God.

We are guilty.

And the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God.

We are justified by the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

Because Jesus has come and taken our sin and guilt upon himself.

Our sin was credited to Jesus –

and Jesus’ righteousness was credited to us.

So we are no longer *guilty* before God –

we are now declared righteous in Jesus Christ.

You were washed, sanctified, and justified

in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

This is why I refer to this as our Trinitarian salvation.

God has delivered us in the name of Jesus – and by his Spirit.

We are baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

We are adopted by the Father as fellow heirs with his Son,

and we are given the Spirit of adoption – the downpayment of our inheritance,
so that we might share in the inheritance of Jesus, the firstborn Son of God.

Paul is saying to the Corinthians,

you were once just like the wicked.

You were the unrighteous – those who were under God’s judgment –

under the coming verdict of “guilty.”

In your sexual life and in your economic life,

you were once immoral and impure.

Once you were sexually immoral – but you have been washed.

Once you were greedy – but you have been sanctified.

Once you wronged others – but you have been justified –

in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

You are no longer who you once were!

TH 526 “Blessed Are the Sons of God”