

DO YOU NOT KNOW?
PART 3

TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-20

INTRODUCTION/REVIEW:

There are two issues at stake in chapters 5-6 of 1 Corinthians. First, there is the crisis of authority (this was a large part of what lay behind 1:10-4:21). The second issue was the centrality of the gospel and its ethical implications for the church being the church (see Fee, *Galatians*, p. 194ff). In brief, the Corinthians had a serious problem with pride and self-will. And, they were arrogantly opposed to sound teaching that accords with the gospel.

Therefore, in 4:18-21, Paul threatens to come and find out the “power/authority” (δυνάμει) of those who were “arrogant.” He threatens the whole church that he will come with a rod (4:21, i.e., church discipline, cf. 5:3-5) should they not follow him and his gospel. Consequently, chapters 5-6 serve as a “test” as to whether or not the Corinthians will remain prideful and self-willed or repent and follow Paul’s instruction in the area of unjust lawsuits and sexual purity.

It is clear that sexual holiness was important to Paul (Note: The apostle devotes 3 chapters, 5-7 to this topic). As we have learned, the Corinthian church was a theological and moral mess. This is clearly demonstrated in chapters 5-6 where we see that the Corinthian believers were unjustly suing fellow believers (6:1-11) in pagan courts and arrogantly tolerating gross sexual immorality (5:1-13; 6:12-20). In fact, Paul says they were so arrogant they were tolerating a kind of sexual immorality that is not even tolerated among pagans (5:1)! In chapter 5, the Corinthians were arrogantly tolerating a man guilty of incest with his stepmother. Even in the Graeco-Roman culture, which was characterized by a morally lax attitude toward sexual practices, such an act would have been deeply offensive. In chapter 6, Paul addresses the problem of members who were visiting temple prostitutes.

Admittedly, it is hard to imagine how such egregious behavior could have occurred in the Corinthian church. Though not an excuse, one must understand the culture out of which the Corinthian believers had been saved. Their past habits and the surrounding culture’s low moral standards exercised a strong, continual pressure on them. The wickedness and vice of Corinth is well documented. Corinth was sex-obsessed seaport (see Prior, *Galatians*, p. 70). Corinth was a byword for evil living. William Barclay writes,

The very word *korinthiazesthai*, to live like a Corinthian, had become part of the Greek language, and meant to live with drunken and immoral debauchery. The word actually penetrated to the English language, and, in Regency times, a Corinthian was one of the wealthy young bucks who lived in

reckless and riotous living Aelian, the late Greek writer, tells us that if ever a Corinthian was shown upon the stage in a Greek play he was shown drunk. The very name Corinth was synonymous with debauchery and there was one source of evil in the city which was known all over the civilized world. Above the isthmus towered the hill of the Acropolis, and on it stood the great temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. To that temple there were attached one thousand priestesses who were sacred prostitutes, and in the evenings they descended from the Acropolis and plied their trade upon the streets of Corinth, until it became a Greek proverb, 'It is not every man who can afford a journey to Corinth.' In addition to these cruder sins, there flourished more recondite vices, which had come in with the traders and the sailors from the ends of the earth, until Corinth became not only a synonym for wealth and luxury, drunkenness and debauchery, but also for filth" (*Galatians*, p. 3).

Gordon Fee also observes,

In a culture where one could matter-of-factly say, 'Mistresses we keep for the sake of pleasure, concubines for the daily care of the body, but wives to bear us legitimate children,' the Judeo-Christian moral restrictions on human sexuality were not easily absorbed by pagan converts. Paul therefore had to address this question regularly in the Gentile churches (cf. 1 Thess. 4:1-8; Col. 3:5-7; Eph. 5:3-13)" (*Galatians*, pp. 196-197).

The rampant sexual permissiveness of Corinth had clearly infected the Corinthian church. For some of the Corinthian believers their pagan past replaced the centrality of the gospel and its ethical implications for their daily lives. So, whether the issue revolved around suing one another in secular courts (6:1-11) or tolerating sexual immorality in the church (5:1-3; 6:12-20), both problems evidence an arrogant preoccupation with self—self-indulgence, self-gratification, self-will—rather than faith in the gospel and submission to the ethics of God's kingdom (i.e., the law as a rule of life). The gospel results in a life of love and concern for the welfare of one's neighbor rather than self-indulgence and self-gratification and self-will.

In answer to the problems plaguing the Corinthian church, Paul, in vv. 9-20, asks four questions. Each set of questions begins with the phrase, "Do you not know...?" and is based on the gospel-philosophy, "Be who you are." The problem with the Corinthian believers was that they didn't really know the gospel and its ethical implications for their daily lives. Paul's four questions were intended to direct the Corinthians back to the gospel and its implications, which alone has the power to change their sexually immoral behavior.

LESSON:

First, in vv. 9-11, Paul rebukes the Corinthians by asking them whether they understand (know) the basic facts of the kingdom of God (see Kistemaker, *Galatians*, p. 187).

Paul ask the Corinthians:

- I. DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT THE UNRIGHTEOUS WILL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD?
vv. 9-11

In vv. 9-10, Paul warns, “⁹ Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? 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.”

Paul is reminding the Corinthians of one of the first principles of the gospel, viz. all who indulge in unrighteousness will not inherit the kingdom of God. Christianity is not only a system of doctrine and form of worship but also a rule of life (see Hodge, *1 Corinthians*, p. 98). In a stinging tone, Paul asks the Corinthians, “Are you Christians and yet ignore the first and basic principle of the kingdom of God, which you profess to be members of?” Once again, Paul instructs the Corinthians about the kingdom of God and its ethical implications for their lives in the matter of sexual purity.

Contextually, vv. 9-11 concludes Paul’s argument against unjust lawsuits (cf. 6:1-11). It bears noting that Christians frequently have trouble recognizing that injustice is as serious a sin as incest and other sexual misconduct and that it warrants the very same punishment (cf. Jer. 7:8-15) (cf. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, p. 211). However, vv. 9-11 also provide a natural transition into vv. 12-20, where Paul takes back up the issue of sexual immorality in the church, which he began in chapter 5. The key question in regard to unjust lawsuits among Christians is also the key question in regard to unrestrained sexual license among Christians (see Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, p. 119).

The Kingdom of God is the binding theme of the whole bible. It was a dominant theme in Jesus’ teaching. Following in the footsteps of Jesus (cf. Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 24:14; Mk. 1:15), the kingdom of God also played an important role in Paul’s thinking and teaching. He makes 5 references to the “kingdom of God” in 1 Corinthians (cf. 4:20; 6:9-10; 15:24; 50). Like Jesus, the Kingdom of God was part of Paul’s gospel. In Acts 28:30-31 Luke provides a summary of Paul’s teaching in Rome. Luke writes, “³⁰ He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, ³¹ proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.”

The importance of the kingdom of God in Scripture and in Paul’s teaching raises some vital questions: What is the kingdom of God? How does it relate to the gospel? Who are the people excluded from the kingdom God? Who are the people who inherit the kingdom of God? What does the kingdom of God have to do with one’s daily life of sexual purity?

First,

A. WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

The kingdom of God can be defined as “God’s people in God’s place under God’s rule and blessing” (Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom*, p. 46; Vaughan Roberts, *God’s Big Picture*, p. 21). To live under God’s rule is to live under His blessing (cf. Roberts, p. 21). The Kingdom of God is first seen in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve lived in God’s place (i.e., the garden) in willing obedience to God’s Word and rule and therefore enjoyed His covenantal blessings. However, when they disobeyed and rebelled against God, they forsook God’s blessings and came under His covenant curses.

The consequences for their disobedience were cosmic in scope and devastating. Not only Adam and Eve but also the whole of mankind along with all of creation itself was corrupted. But God, in a surprising act of grace, makes a promise to restore His kingdom once again (cf. Gen. 3:15). Through a series of successive stages (marked by conditional and unconditional covenants), God, as the great promise keeping and performing King, acts to restore a people to be the willing subjects of His perfect rule. Each successive stage builds on the former until the fulfillment of His initial promise (Gen. 3:15) comes through Christ’s first coming and then the consummation of His promise at Christ’s second coming.

The kingdom of God then is both “already” (1 Cor. 4:20) and “not yet” (1 Cor. 6:9-10; 15:24, 50). And so we that the Bible is an unfolding story about how God, the King, is faithful to His initial promise to restore His kingdom, which finds fulfillment and consummation through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

B. HOW DOES THE KINGDOM OF GOD RELATE TO THE GOSPEL?

Presently, we live in what Vaughan Roberts calls, “The Proclaimed Kingdom” (see *God’s Big Picture*, pp. 123-135). During our days, God’s kingdom is spreading as the Holy Spirit works through the proclamation of the gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 6:11). Graeme Goldsworthy writes, “This is how the Kingdom of God comes: Jesus exercises His Kingly power through the scepter of His preached gospel” (*Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, p. 55). Through the gospel of the kingdom, the Holy Spirit is gathering a people to be the willing subjects/citizens of God’s rule and blessing. Through the gospel, God’s people are brought into God’s place—the church, which Paul calls the temple of God—to live under Christ’s rule and blessing. In 1 Corinthians 3:16, Paul describes the church as God’s temple (i.e., the dwelling place of God). In 1 Corinthians 6:19, Paul says that the believer’s own body is a temple of the Holy Spirit (i.e., the dwelling place of God).

This brings us to a third question concerning the kingdom of God.

C. WHAT DOES THE KINGDOM OF GOD HAVE TO DO WITH OUR DAILY LIFE OF SEXUAL PURITY?

Paul's application of the kingdom of God to the topic of sexual purity is obvious: Because we are already citizens of God's kingdom, we are expected and enabled to live in a new way that is characterized by righteousness rather than unrighteousness. Simply put, "The law sends us to the gospel for our justification; the gospel sends us to the law to frame our way of life..." (Samuel Bolton, *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom*, p. 72). The gospel is given to free us and empower us to live in obedience to God's law, which expresses the standard of righteousness in God's kingdom. As God's people in God's place, we are now once again under God's rule and blessing. We have been set free from the condemnation and power of sin. Therefore, we are not victims of uncontrollable passions and desires. We have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ, granted the gift of the Holy Spirit and therefore enabled to enjoy all the blessings of the new covenant. David Prior observes, "Citizens of such a kingdom were called to live in a special way: more than that, they were able to live in a distinctive way, and it was therefore doubly crucial for them to be different" (*Galatians*, p. 91).

Since these gospel realities are true, we are not to be marked by arrogance, pride and self-will and unrighteousness. We are not to live in opposition to the gospel and its implications for our daily lives. As we have learned, Paul believed and taught that the kingdom of God had already been ushered into this present age (4:20). It has been inaugurated by Christ's resurrection but not yet fully consummated until His return (6:9-10; 15:24, 50). Paul is saying: Because you have already been made a citizen of God's kingdom, act like it. Live like a citizen of God's kingdom. Be who you are. Just as you should stop suing one another (6:1-10), you must also stop living in sexual immorality (5:1-13; 6:11-20).

However, because the Corinthians failed to understand (know) the basic facts of the kingdom of God, Paul issues a strong warning against those who will not inherit the kingdom of God.

D. WHO ARE THE PEOPLE EXCLUDED FROM THE KINGDOM GOD?

In vv. 9-10, gives an illustrative rather than exhaustive list of the unrighteous (unjustified) who are not right with God and therefore will not inherit the kingdom of God. Each of the ten sins in Paul's vice list is a violation of God's moral law. They illustrate behaviors of those outside the kingdom of God who live in open violation of God's law. These ten sins characterize the fallen culture of Corinth in which the Corinthian church was living and from which the Corinthian church had been saved. Paul's vice list is intended to warn that there are certain behaviors that cannot be a part of faithful Christian living; cannot reflect the ethical standards of the kingdom of God (see Robert Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, p. 305).

Paul's vice list nearly parallels his vice list in 5:10-11 with the addition of adulterers, men who practice homosexuality and thieves. Heading the list are the "sexually immoral" (πόρνοι). This is a violation of 7th Commandment. This vice is most likely at the head of the list because it is the problem Paul is addressing in this context.

The sexually immoral refers to any form of sexual behavior outside the bounds of a monogamous, life-long, heterosexual marriage bond (i.e., pre-marital, extra-marital or unnatural sex). The sexual ethic in God's kingdom is clear: abstinent singleness or heterosexual marriage.

After sexually immoral, Paul lists idolatry. "Idolaters" (εἰδωλολάτραι) refers to all who place their trust in anyone or anything other than the one true God who has revealed Himself in His Word and the Word, Jesus Christ (see Heidelberg Catechism, Q. 94-95). Idolatry is a violation of the 1st and 2nd Commandments. Idolatry follows the sexually immoral because both vices reflect the problem in 1 Corinthians (cf. 5:1-13; 6:12-20; 8:1-11:1; 10:14 (Fee, *Galatians*, p. 243).

Idolatry and sexual immorality were closely conjoined in Jewish thought (see Robert Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, p. 306). Infidelity to one's spouse became a metaphor for infidelity to God. The OT prophets frequently symbolized God's relationship to Israel as a husband-wife relationship (cf. Isa. 62:5; Jer. 3:14). Thus, Hosea represented Israel's sins—especially idolatry—as adultery (Hosea 4:1-19). Certainly sexual immorality is one of the more visible idols of our sex-obsessed culture in America. After idolatry, Paul lists "adulterers" (μοιχοὶ). Adulterers refer to married persons who violate their vows and engage in sexual behavior outside of their marriage. Adultery is a violation of the 7th Commandment.

Following heterosexual sin, Paul now lists homosexual sin, "men who practice homosexuality." Like adultery, this too is a violation of the 7th Commandment. The ESV's translation, "men who practice homosexuality" is actually composed of two different Greek words. The reason the ESV translates these two words in one descriptive phrase is for ease of public discourse on this subject (see Robert Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, p. 313, footnote 99). However, in expositing Paul's meaning greater precision is needed.

First, Paul uses the word, μαλακοὶ, which literally means "the soft ones," and can be translated "effeminate males who play the sexual role of females," (see Gagnon, p. 306). With this term, Paul is referring to the passive partner in homosexual intercourse (Ibid, p. 312). Second, Paul uses the word, ἄρσενοκοῖται, which literally means "male-bedders" and can be translated, "males who take other males to bed" (see Ibid, p. 306). With this term, Paul is referring to the active partners in homosexual sexual intercourse.

A word of clarification is needed concerning Paul's pairing of these two terms. Paul is speaking about same-sex intercourse or homosexual practice as opposed to homosexual orientation (Ibid, p. 37). The Apostle is pronouncing judgment on those who serially persist in homosexual acts/behavior rather than those who struggle with a homosexual inclination. Robert Gagnon observes, "Experiencing desires for intercourse with people of the same sex is not in itself sin, though like all impulses it can become sin if such thoughts are embraced and nurtured" (Ibid, p. 312, footnote 99). Again, Dr. Gagnon notes, "What matters is not what urges individuals feel but

what they do with these urges, both in their fantasy life and in their concrete actions” (Ibid, p. 38).

Though admittedly quite unpopular in our culture, Paul, by pairing these two terms, is unequivocally stating that all who engage in homosexual practice as a settled way of life will not inherit the kingdom of God. We must consider also that Paul’s statement wasn’t popular in his culture either. The sexual ethics of the kingdom of God were positioned squarely against the prevailing cultural norms in the 1st century culture of Corinth. William Barclay writes,

This sin had swept like a cancer through Greek life and from Greece, invaded Rome. We can scarcely realize how riddled the ancient world was with it. Even so great a man as Socrates practiced it; Plato’s dialogue *The Symposium* is always said to be one of the greatest works on love in the world, but its subject is not natural but unnatural love. Fourteen out of the first fifteen Roman Emperors practiced unnatural vice. At this very time Nero was emperor. He had taken a boy called Sporus and had him castrated. He then married him with a full marriage ceremony and took him home in procession to his palace and lived with him as wife. With an incredible viciousness, Nero had himself married a man called Pythagoras and called him his husband. When Nero was eliminated and Otho came to the throne one of the first things he did was to take possession of Sporus. Much later, the Emperor Hadrian’s name was associated with a Bithynian youth called Antinous. He lived with him inseparably, and, when he died, he deified him and covered the world with his statues and immortalized his sin by calling a star after him. In this particular vice, in the time of the Early Church, the world was lost to shame; and there can be little doubt that this was one of the main causes of its degeneracy and the final collapse of its civilization (*1 Corinthians*, pp. 53-54).

With this said, Robert Gagnon’s comments concerning homosexuality and those who feel homosexual impulses is worth quoting at length. Dr. Gagnon writes,

The homosexuality debate is generally not pleasant for those who speak out publicly against homosexual behavior—at least it has never been for me. Not only does it leave one vulnerable to the host of stereotypes treated above (homophobic, intolerant, resistant to diversity, uncritical scholarship, primitive understandings of sexuality, endowing the homosexuality debate with unmerited importance, promoting violence against homosexuals) and position one squarely against the cultural norms prevailing in most of the media, academy, and secular establishment, but it also forces one to uphold standards of righteousness when keenly aware of one’s own imperfections and need for grace. It also compels one to emphasize the negative and define the boundaries rather than to discuss more uplifting core elements of the faith.

Perhaps worst of all is the knowledge that a rigorous critique of same-sex intercourse can have the unintended effect of bringing personal pain to homosexuals, some of whom are already prone to self-loathing. This is why it needs to be emphatically stated that to feel homosexual impulses does not make one a bad person. I deplore attempts to demean the humanity of homosexuals. Whatever one thinks about the immorality of homosexual behavior, or about the obnoxiousness of elements within the homosexual lobby, homosexual impulses share with all other sinful impulses the feature of being an attack on the 'I' or inner self experiencing the impulses (Rom 7:14-25). The person beset with homosexual temptation should evoke our concern, sympathy, help and understanding, not our scorn or enmity. Even more, such a person should kindle a feeling of solidarity in the hearts of all Christians, since we all struggle to properly manage our erotic passions. A homosexual impulse, while sinful, cannot take shape as accountable sin in a person's life unless one acquiesces to it. Thus a reasoned denunciation of homosexual behavior and all other attempts at nurturing and justifying homosexual passions is not, and should not be construed as, a denunciation of those victimized by homosexual urges, since the aim is to rescue the true self created in God's image for a full life (*The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, p. 32).

Following sexual sins, Paul also lists "thieves" (κλέπται). This refers to robbery and belongs to 6:1-11. Theft is a violation of the 8th Commandment. Barclay notes that theft was widespread in the ancient world. He points out that houses were easy to break into and the strict punishment of Roman law illustrates how serious the problem was (*Galatians*, p. 52). "Greedy" (πλεονέκται) comes next and speaks of the state of desiring to have more than one's due; covetousness. Greed is a violation of the 8th Commandment and goes hand in hand with thievery. Greedy, covetous people desire that which belongs to others and thieves act on their covetous, selfish desires. David Garland notes that greed applies to both rich and poor alike. Greed is selfishness and a demand for more and more. A greedy person treats others only as objects for self-gratification (Garland, *1 Corinthians*, p. 215). Thus, greed can apply not to just money but also to sexuality, a selfish desire that is never satisfied.

"Drunkards" (μέθυσοι) is self-evident. Excessive and uncontrolled drinking/drunkenness has no place among those who are citizens of God's kingdom. Paul joins drunkenness with unrestrained license/profligacy in Ephesians 5:18. Since Paul joins drunkenness with profligacy, drunkenness could be placed under the 7th Commandment. Drunkards throw off every restraint of modesty and shame. Astonishingly, drunkenness by way of selfish indulgence and indifference to others characterized the Corinthians abuse of the Lord's Supper (cf. 1 Cor. 11:21)! It is no wonder then why Paul issues such sobering warnings of God's judgment against those who abuse the Lord's Supper (cf. 1 Cor. 11:27-32).

"Revilers" (λοιδόροι) are verbally abusive people. This is a violation of the 9th Commandment. Revilers are people who abuse others with their speech (e.g.,

backbiters, slanderers, gossips, twisting of one's words, condemning others, lying, etc...). Sinful speech betrays the sin of one's heart, as Jesus said, "...out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matt. 12:34). One needs to take note that God does not consider the sins of the tongue lightly. Sins of the tongue are just as serious a sin as unjust lawsuits, incest and other sexual misconduct and warrants the very same punishment (i.e., exclusion from the kingdom of God).

"Swindlers" (ἄρπαγες) speaks of persons who take advantage of others to promote their own financial gain by extortion, false advertising, deceit, etc... Bernie Madoff would make Paul's swindler's list. This vice is a violation of the 8th Commandment.

These ten sins define and illustrate the unrighteousness, which excludes men from the kingdom of God. It is important to understand that Paul's list is not directed to Christians who struggle with the flesh (cf. Gal. 5:17). He is not referring to momentary lapses and failures. Paul recognizes that because Christians are at the same time saint and sinner (*simul iustus et peccator*), they will struggle and fail (cf. Rom. 7). Because the kingdom of God is "already but not yet," believers are not entirely free from sin in this life (cf. Canons of Dort, 5:1).

Paul's warning then applies to those who live in continual, open rebellion against God and have no inward delight to follow God's moral law. All who live in unrighteousness as a settled way of life will not inherit the kingdom of God. Paul repeatedly issued such warnings throughout his letters. He warned that perpetual-unrepentant immorality excludes the unrighteous from the kingdom of God (cf., Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-6; 1 Thess. 4:2-8). Such perpetual, unrighteous living demonstrates that a person is not a citizen of God's kingdom.

All the sins listed here by Paul share a common characteristic: self-indulgence, self-gratification and self-will rather than faith in the gospel and submission to the ethics of God's kingdom (i.e., the law as a rule of life).

REFLECTION:

As we reflect upon Paul's warning, let us remember three things.

1. JUDGMENT IS CERTAIN.

Judgment (exclusion from the kingdom of God) is the fate of the serially unrighteous. Paul's warning is real and is no trivial matter. The seriousness and urgency of Paul's tone ought to make a deep impression upon us. He is warning that some in the church "will not inherit the kingdom of God." Paul is warning, "Do not be deceived. Let all who wish to live unrighteous lives be warned. To reject Christ's rule (Kingship) and to live in open rebellion against His kingdom is disastrous!" Rather than inheriting God's kingdom the unrighteous will be excluded (i.e., judged, cf. 6:2).

2. WE MUST GUARD AGAINST THE TENDENCY TO BE DECEIVED.

Paul's concern is for the Corinthians to stop deceiving themselves. The danger of the Corinthians remaining under the spell of deception is highlighted by Paul's imperative, "Do not be deceived!" Paul warns, "Do not be deceived. If you really think that gospel liberty is to be equated with lawless license, think again! Righteousness is the fundamental characteristic of God's kingdom. Those who lives are characterized by unrighteousness as a settled way of life will not inherit the kingdom of God."

David Powlison writes, "If we knew we were deceived, we would not be deceived. But we are deceived, unless awakened through God's truth and Spirit." Paul is seeking to awaken us from the deceitfulness of sin. Sin is intrinsically deceitful. The author of Hebrews in 3:13 says, "But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." In Ephesians 4:22, Paul exhorts believers to "put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires..." In Galatians 6:3, Paul writes, "If anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself."

Powlison writes, "Sin blinds, while preserving the illusion of seeing." Because sin is deceiving it makes temptation a lot more difficult. Sin is exceedingly deceptive. Sin presents itself to us as pleasing, good and desirable. Thus, we can be easily deceived into thinking that we can freely indulge in sin without consequences. But, Paul warns, "Deception is disastrous!" John Owen once said "The deceitfulness of sin is seen in that it is modest in its first proposals but when it prevails it hardens men's hearts, and brings them to ruin." Therefore, when we are tempted to give into illicit sexual desires, we must heed Paul's warning and quickly turn away and embrace Christ and His purifying gospel truths.

3. RIGHTEOUSNESS AND UNRIGHTEOUSNESS WILL NOT COEXIST IN THE CONSUMMATION OF GOD'S KINGDOM.

Paul is driving home the point that nothing unrighteous, nothing impure, nothing unholy or corrupt will inherit the kingdom of God. In Revelation 21 and 22, John sees a vision of how all of redemptive history is going to end (i.e., the consummation of God's kingdom). He warns that the unrighteous are not going to be there. In Revelation 21:27, John warns, "nothing unclean will ever enter it..." (Rev. 21:27). In Revelation 22:15 John warns that all who give into the pressure and temptation of the surrounding pagan culture will be excluded from God's kingdom, "Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood."

David Prior writes,

The unrighteous cannot inherit the kingdom of God because God is altogether righteous. The unrighteous actually exclude themselves from the kingdom of a righteous God. They exclude themselves by their own chosen behaviour.

Because God's kingdom reflects his own character or righteousness and compassion, those who insist on living by different standards will not be there" (*1 Corinthians*, pp. 88-89).

This then is the first and basic fact of the kingdom of God: the unrighteous cannot inherit the kingdom of God. All who persistently indulge in unrighteousness will not be there. Since unrighteousness cannot inherit God's kingdom in the future it must not be tolerated now in the present. "The ethics of the kingdom yet to come determine the morals of the kingdom that now is" (Geoffrey Wilson, *Galatians*, p. 251).

However, as we will come to see, Paul's warning is not the final word on the matter. In an amazing and swift change, Paul brings his first argument to a conclusion by reaffirming the Corinthians new status as citizens (saints) in God's kingdom. Paul says some of you were once greedy, litigious idolaters and some of you were once sexually immoral idolaters. But now, in Christ by the Holy Spirit you are a new creation, a citizen of God's kingdom. Therefore, be who you are!

Paul invites the Corinthians to change their behavior by reminding them that they do indeed inherit the kingdom of God because of the gracious work of Christ and the Holy Spirit (v. 11). Because you are no longer among those who persist in unrighteousness but rather are now a new creation—saint—live like it. Do not be deceived. Stop being arrogant. Stop treating others unjustly. Stop tolerating sexual immorality.

Take your cues for ethical living from God's kingdom rather than the fallen culture in which you still live but have been delivered. Live out your new life as a citizen of the kingdom of God.

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