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Sermon Notes

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Only Transformed People Inherit the Kingdom of God

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

We Christians live in an extremely distressing time in our nation, when it seems like wickedness is waxing stronger and stronger around us, and the church of Jesus Christ seems to be getting weaker and weaker all the time... like we are living spiritually in the time of the plague – the Black Death – the swept across the continent of Europe and took out in some communities up to a third of the population. In the same way, it seems like morality in our popular culture is contagious, and the church itself has caught the disease. We see the signs everywhere, and it is rightly a cause for deep concern and relentless vigilance.

But we should not suppose that any of these things are new, as though we're the first generation of Christ's people that has had to face the kinds of wickedness and immorality that are assaulting us. As we come this morning to 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, we are stabbed broad awake by its fierce words and its severe warning:

THE WICKED WILL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD!

And then we read carefully the sin patterns that Paul delineates here – fornication, idolatry, adultery, effeminacy, homosexuality, robbery, greed, drunkenness, reviling, swindling – and we realize that we could have taken this list off the news feeds that our smartphones report in this 21st century... and we realize there is nothing new under the sun. Satan has been enslaving human souls in the same sin patterns in every generation.

Our technological prowess through centuries of stunning scientific progress has not changed our basic sin nature one bit. Underneath all of it, the sinner who stands transfixed by his smartphone is at core the exact same as the sinner who visited the pagan temples of Corinth.

And when our spiritual father, the Apostle Paul, is warning us with tears that we will NOT inherit the Kingdom of God if we are not transformed from these sins by the power of the gospel of Christ and by the inner-working of the Holy Spirit, we MUST be roused by words that seem to kill, but actually bring life:

Hosea 6:5 Therefore I cut you in pieces with my prophets, I killed you with the words of my mouth; my judgments flashed like lightning upon you.

This is the work of our Savior, to rescue us from sins that will sink us to hell... he strikes us now with WORDS, he swings the sword that comes from his mouth, to kill us in our sin and bring us back to life in his purity

Paul's warning here contains the genuine work of the gospel – it is basically this: when God rescues people from Satan's dark dominion, he does it by transforming their hearts from within by the powerful Holy Spirit, causing them to love righteousness and hate wickedness. From this transformed heart comes a transformed life. If that transformed heart as signaled by a changed life doesn't happen, you will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

A church that doesn't understand that truth and embrace that truth and live out that truth and proclaim that truth to the enslaved sinners that surround it in that community **is no church at all**. It has lost its saltiness and is worthless...

But **a church** that understands, lives out, and proclaims the transforming power of the true gospel is a TRUE CHURCH

We are being cowed into silence about some sins in our age... especially homosexuality. We are being intimidated by the strident voices of our age; we are being called BIGOTS and lumped in with racists who opposed the civil rights movement in the 60s... if we say that homosexuality is a soul-killing sin, and if we plead with people to repent from it; if we say that they must stop the homosexual lifestyle or they will be condemned to eternity in hell, we are shouted down; we are being told that homosexuality is GENETIC, an essential part of the makeup of some people, like race or eye color, or height... they were BORN that way, and to say that they can and must change is to do severe damage to their psyches, even leading to suicide. The term that this movement coined is amazing: HOMOPHOBIA, as though it were a psychological disease to believe that homosexuality is a soul-killing poison, and that it is not inherent to the essential character of any human being to be a homosexual, and that a person can be rescued from that lifestyle and from those lusts to become a whole new person in Christ. Such convictions are cultural HERESY in the 21st century; but they flow straight from the Bible, especially from this text that we are looking at today.

Paul says "Do not be deceived" and lists a whole set of sins that people MUST repent from, including fornication and greed... those are soul-killing sins too; but he gives amazing hope to ALL sinners, including homosexual

sinners, that we can be radically transformed and made new by Christ, when he says **“such WERE some of you!”** A person can be made an ex-fornicator, or an ex-adulterer, or an ex-thief, or an ex-materialist, or an ex-drunk... or yes, an ex-homosexual. Not only so, that they **MUST** experience this transformation, or they will not inherit the Kingdom of God

That is the text we are looking at today!

May God grant us the grace to see this passage, these words, straight-on, honestly, and by the power of the Holy Spirit!

May God grant us the grace to accept this message, no matter how it marginalizes us from our contemporary culture!

May God grant us the courage to persuade people around us to stop drinking the spiritual poison of sin, and to beg them to be reconciled to God by the saving work of Christ! No matter what names they call us!

I. Paul’s Warning: Do Not Be Deceived

1 Corinthians 6:9 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived

A. Warning Against Deception

1. Paul is urgently seeking to cut through the danger of deception

John 8:44 [The devil] was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

2. Sin is also a deceiver

Hebrews 3:13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

“Hardened by sin’s deceitfulness” = progressively changed in your hearts to become more and more rebellious against God... hardened = less yielded, more defiant; also less sensitive... like a person’s calloused hands becoming less and less sensitive; so the more we sin, the less it bothers us

Sin is DECEITFUL... like its father, Satan; sin lies to us, promising us happiness, promising us success and prosperity... but it assassinates our souls; it means to take from us everything we value in life, to make our bodies

sick, our minds wracked with sorrow and anguish and anxiety; sin means to plunder our resources and leave us penniless and suicidal

Sin approaches us in disguise, and never tells us the truth about the journey it is about to take us on

3. Worst of all is being SELF-DECEIVED... lying to yourself about your sin
 - a. We have the ability to make excuses for behaviors that the Bible clearly condemns
 - b. We can say things to ourselves, like "It's not so bad" or "I only did it once" or "I can stop anytime I want" or "No one really cares anyway" or "God loves me no matter what I do"

B. This Deception: "I can be a Christian and still live in sin"

Matthew Henry: "Men are very much inclined to flatter themselves that *God is just like me*, and that they may live in sin and yet die in Christ, may lead the life of the devil's children and yet go to heaven with the children of God. But this is all a gross cheat."

C. Immediate Context

1. Paul has been addressing the issue of lawsuits among believers
2. It seems that a member of the church defrauded another in business... swindling him out of some money; the offended brother took the swindler to court, presenting this dirty laundry before the eyes of pagans
3. Paul severely criticizes him for doing this... he comes down really hard on the plaintiff for suing a fellow Christian before the court

1 Corinthians 6:7 The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?

4. But here in this text, he gives an even more severe warning to the swindler... he lists very grievous sin patterns that cannot be practiced by people who hope to go to heaven when they die, and the final one on the list is SWINDLING
5. He is saying, "You may get away with it; you may swindle a fellow church member of some money and win your court case. But people like that DO NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD!"

II. Paul's Doctrine: Only Transformed Sinners Inherit the Kingdom

1 Corinthians 6:9 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God?

Strong assertion! And he repeats it!!

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders ¹⁰ nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

A. “Do You Not Know That...”

1. It all comes down to doctrine... to the knowledge that comes from the faithful teaching of the Word of God
2. What we know **MUST** drive how we live... knowledge feeds faith; knowledge plus faith transforms our hearts; from transformed hearts we live transformed lives
3. Paul in asking “Do you not know...?” seems to be going back to teaching he most certainly gave them when he was there teaching them Christian doctrine for “some time” (Acts 18:18)
4. The Corinthians were enmeshed in patterns of pagan wickedness when he arrived in Corinth, when he was with them
5. The Corinthians were visiting the pagan temples and sacrificing to the pagan deities by having sex with temple prostitutes, both male and female
6. There is **NO DOUBT** that Paul called them to repent from their lives of sin and to believe in Christ for the salvation of their souls
7. **REPENTANCE** must be preached as a part of the true gospel

Acts 14:15 We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them.

B. “The Wicked Will Not Inherit the Kingdom of God”

1. The “Kingdom of God” is the realm where God is King and rules actively over people who delight in his rule
2. What does it mean to “inherit the Kingdom of God”?
3. Jesus used “inherit” to speak of the future world

Matthew 5:5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

4. A Christian’s inheritance speaks to the future world, the perfect world of the New Heaven and New Earth and New Jerusalem
 - a. A world with no death, mourning, crying, or pain...

- b. A world of radiant beauty so overwhelming we could not stand it if God did not give us new resurrection bodies
- c. A world filled with the glory of God
- d. To inherit the Kingdom of God means to be qualified for heaven

Revelation 22:14-15 "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.

To WASH YOUR ROBES AND MAKE THEM WHITE is the exact same teaching that Paul is giving here; only if that happens will we have the right to enter heaven, that perfect world

And that happens when we truly believe in Christ and are transformed by the Spirit into a new pattern of life... as the next verse in Revelation 22 makes plain:

Revelation 22:15 Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

- 5. So, when Paul says "the wicked will not inherit the Kingdom of God," he means that they will not go to heaven when they die
- 6. The wicked must be redeemed, transformed by the work of the Holy Spirit to be fit for heaven

C. The Danger: if a person does not repent from these soul-killing sins

Matthew 25:41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

- 1. The most compassionate thing the church and all Christians can do is TELL THE TRUTH, to warn people to flee the wrath to come
- 2. All sin is deadly poison... to see someone drinking deadly poison and say nothing, or even celebrate what they're drinking, is to be a partner in their spiritual suicide
- 3. When it comes to homosexuality in our day, Christians are under intense pressure to NOT tell the truth... to give consent to homosexuality, even to celebrate it, when the Bible reveals clearly that if they don't repent from their sins, they will be condemned
- 4. The demeanor should be one of urgency and grief
- 5. We must put aside what the world thinks of us as well tell the truth... that it calls us bigoted, hateful, "homophobes" as though we're mentally ill, morally

no different than racists who fought against the Civil Rights movement of the 60s

6. Those charges are FALSE and they will be shown to be false on Judgment Day... we have to be courageous to tell people the truth, no matter what the cost
7. Missionaries in Muslim countries risk their lives to tell Muslims the truth about Christ; these missionaries are seen in the worst possible light by ardent Muslims... if a missionary is seeking to lead a person to renounce Islam and come to saving faith in Christ, that person's family—their father or brothers or uncles—might will hunt them down and seek to murder them, and they will feel they are doing the right thing for the honor of Allah and his prophet, Muhammad
8. But if missionaries in those countries really love those they are trying to reach, they must be willing to put up with the hatred of the community to win a few souls to eternal glory
9. So must we in America in reference to the homosexual movement

D. The Only People Who Inherit the Kingdom of God are Transformed Sinners

1. Sins can only be atoned for by the blood of Jesus Christ, shed on the cross
2. Faith in Christ apart from works is the perfect salvation for sinners
3. BUT genuine faith ALWAYS results in a transformed life

III. The Representative Sin List

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders ¹⁰ nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

A. This is Not an Exhaustive Sin List... It was Specially Chosen by Paul

B. Looking at the List in Detail

1. **Fornicators**—the sexually immoral (literally *pornoi*)—will not inherit the Kingdom of God
 - a. Most commonly, unmarried people who indulge in sex with other unmarried people; this is so common in our culture today that people think of it as strange if someone is a zealot to maintain their virginity until marriage; college campuses are rife with fornication... but Paul warns us that such people will not inherit the kingdom of God

- b. This is a very clear way that God is calling Christians to be different from the world... to maintain sexual purity before marriage; this passage warns the severe outcome if people just give themselves to fornication, thinking it's fine spiritually because "everyone is doing it"
- c. The Bible's standard for sexual activity is one man, one woman in covenant marriage for life; everything else is sin

2. **Idolaters** will not inherit the Kingdom of God

- a. Those who worship idols; those who live for created things rather than the Creator
- b. Certainly all those who follow pagan religions, who worship and serve false gods—Buddha, Allah, Krishna, or whatever false god /goddess there may be, will not inherit the Kingdom of God
- c. BUT in Colossians 3:5 Paul also says that greed is idolatry... so in our day and age, the driven materialist, the Fortune 500 executive who lives for money, or even the medical student who simply wants to be a doctor so he or she can make as much money as possible is an idolater; if you're living for money and material things, you cannot inherit the Kingdom of God

3. **Adulterers** will not inherit the Kingdom of God

- a. Adultery is one or both of the partners married to someone else, violating the covenant of sexual purity they have made
- b. Most people in our culture will still acknowledge that such behavior is sinful, yet it is commonplace, portrayed more times than one can count in media—movies, books, etc.
- c. The devastation caused by adultery in our nation is beyond calculation... the number of marriages ruined, the heartbreak for the children, the sense of betrayal can hardly be measured

4. **The effeminate** will not inherit the Kingdom of God; better translation: "effeminate males who play the sexual role of females"

- a. Robert Gagnon is a scholar who has made a special study of the Bible and Homosexual Practice... he did a great deal of careful work on the two terms in 1 Corinthians 6:9... the word translated by the KJV as "effeminate" is literally "soft ones"
- b. Males who dress like women, affect feminine behaviors, wear makeup and long hair with jewelry like women, to prepare themselves for the sexual role of a woman with another man
- c. In our culture, we have seen these kinds of people portrayed very positively in sitcoms and in movies, usually as sympathetic figures... Hollywood has

been “boiling the frog” in America for decades, getting us to accept homosexuality by delighting in these kinds of effeminate men

- d. So also we can see them in certain settings in society, certain jobs that attract effeminate men, and they carry themselves plainly in a certain way to give off the desired signals to possible partners
- e. The ultimate end of this is total gender confusion, seen in the transgender movement... this is part of Satan’s plan

5. Males who take other males to bed will not inherit the Kingdom of God

- a. This is the verbally accurate translation of the Greek word “arsenokoitai”... a term that Paul invented, it seems from the Greek translation for Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13

Leviticus 18:22 "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.

- b. The previous term had to do with the one who played the feminine role in a homosexual relationship; this term has to do with the masculine role in the homosexual relationship
- c. How can we allow ourselves to be deceived on this issue? To think we are being UNLOVING if we tell the biblical truth to our generation??
- d. Many Christians have bought into this brainwashing by the secular media and the Hollywood elite, that we are homophobic or unloving or vicious if we believe this doctrine

6. Thieves will not inherit the Kingdom of God

- a. No one in our culture is advocating a legalization of theft... we all know this is a sin

7. The greedy will not inherit the Kingdom of God... as we just said, they are really just idolaters

8. Drunkards will not inherit the Kingdom of God

- a. People addicted to wine... who live for the bottle
- b. This word may come as a shock to some people... many have come to think of alcoholism as a disease, no different than cancer... but Paul lists it here as a habit pattern that the grace of God must break through faith in Christ

9. Revilers (blasphemers) will not inherit the Kingdom of God

- a. These are people who use their words as weapons... verbally abusing people, chewing them out with cursing

10. **Swindlers** will not inherit the Kingdom of God

- a. Bringing us to the context again... the man who defrauded his neighbor by a shady business deal
- b. Con artists, unscrupulous business owners, people who purposely deceive their customers and defraud them... like a roofing company that I heard of that took an older widow's money and began the work on her roof, but soon skipped town leaving the job completely unfinished and her roof exposed to the elements...
- c. Anyone who lies to a customer and swindles them from their money

C. It is Important for Us to See the **WHOLE LIST**... and realize it is a representative, incomplete list

IV. The Transforming Power of Jesus and the Spirit

1 Corinthians 6:11 And such were some of you. 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.

A. Here is the **GOOD NEWS** of the Gospel... Such **WERE** some of you!!

- 1. The gospel has the power to transform the human heart, and by it to transform the entire pattern of life

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

- 2. When Christ comes to save you, he comes to save you **COMPLETELY**
- 3. By the power of the Holy Spirit, he can take out the heart of stone and give you the heart of flesh
- 4. You can become a **NEW PERSON**... indeed, you **MUST** become a new person, or you can't inherit the Kingdom of God!
- 5. You can be a **FORMER** fornicator, a former adulterer, a former drunk, a former idolater or greedy person, you can be a former swindler...
- 6. And **YES**, you can be a **FORMER HOMOSEXUAL!!**
- 7. **"Such WERE some of you!!"**

B. Washed, Sanctified, Justified **IN THE NAME** of the **LORD JESUS**, and by the **SPIRIT** of our God!

- 1. The **NAME** of the Lord Jesus is central to this work!

Romans 10:13 “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Acts 4:12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

- a. The “name of the Lord Jesus” means his PERSON as God the Son
- b. Also his reputation and achievements: His miracles, his work on the cross, his resurrection from the dead...
2. So also the Spirit of God is the POWER behind the saving work of God... by the power of the Spirit our minds/hearts can be changed

C. Washed, Sanctified, Justified

1. Washed

- a. Cleansed from all our sins
- b. Our guilty consciences cleansed by the blood of Christ
- c. Our filthy minds washed and made new, so that now we have the mind of Christ
- d. Our filthy bodies washed with pure water through the word so that we live a new, clean pattern of life
- e. This is the work of the Holy Spirit

Titus 3:5 He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit

2. Sanctified

- a. Two-fold: first, Set apart as God’s holy possession... belonging to him now
- b. Secondly, made holy... progressively changed, by the gradual renewing of the mind through the ministry of the Word of God

3. Justified = completely forgiven of all our past sins

- a. All the fornication committed in the past can be covered by the blood of Christ... it can be submerged in the ocean of God’s grace
- b. All the homosexual actions in the past... for both the effeminate partner and the dominant partner, all can be forgiven, cast into the depths of the sea of God’s forgiveness in Christ
- c. All the times the drunk drowned his sorrows in the bottle and lost his job, his friends, his family, his possessions, his health... those sins can be forgiven... he can be JUSTIFIED

D. This TRANSFORMATION of lifestyle MUST OCCUR in the name of Jesus by the power of the Spirit

NEXT TIME:

E. Significance for the issue of Homosexuality

V. Applications

A. Come to Christ

1. We MUST be born again, or we will not inherit the Kingdom of God
2. The grace of God has overwhelming power to save us from sin
3. But we must not be deceived thinking we can live willfully and unrepentantly in sin and still go to heaven

B. Live a Transformed Life

1. Are you living in any of the sins mentioned here?
2. Let the fear of God's righteous judgment drive you to the cross and to the power of the Spirit to live a transformed life
3. Do not deceive yourself or make any allowances for the sins you are habitually living in

C. Tell Others the Truth!!