

*God's Wisdom in an Age of Confusion*  
**1 Corinthians 6:9-11**  
*New Desires for a New Destiny*

**Introduction**

Good morning! Welcome to EBC, please open your Bibles to 1 Corinthians... Lion King illustration...??

**Background to Corinth: Review**

Over the last couple of weeks, Pastor Michael showed us how Paul rebukes the Corinthians for not adequately dealing with specific sins and issues going on in the congregation. We have immorality between a step-mom and son, as well as certain individuals suing one another over some kind of legal dispute. In all of this, we find that the Corinthian are imitating the “world” and the culture around them. In doing so, they are bringing shame upon the name of Christ and failing to live up to the wonderful privileges God has given them: to be in fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ, who is eternal life. In other words, they are in danger of forgetting who they are...

This morning, we will see how Paul reminds the Corinthians of who they are in Christ, namely, people who are now in fellowship with Christ. In other words, **IDENTITY INFORMS BEHAVIOR**. As followers of Jesus, we are *people who have been given new desires for a new destiny: fellowship with Christ!* Today, my hope is to remind you who are in Christ and what you have received. And if you are not in Christ, what is being offered to you. Let's pray...

**Exposition of 1 Corinthians 6:9-11**

Last week, here is where things were left off. 1 Cor. 6:8 - In verse 8, Paul says that they are cheating and defrauding one another and ignoring the fact that they are a family in Christ – brothers and sisters redeemed by the blood and sacrifice of Jesus, God's own son! Next, in verses 9-10 Paul describes the culture around them, as those who are not inheriting the coming kingdom of God.

1 Cor. 6:9a - What does this mean to inherit the kingdom of God, and why won't those whose character is shaped by these kinds of behaviors and practices not inherit it? We are getting ahead of ourselves a bit, but in 1 Cor. 15:50, Paul states that “neither flesh nor blood will inherit the Kingdom of God”, implying that it's impossible for human beings, as they are, to inherit something that is spiritual, perfect, holy. We must receive bodies which are prepared by God himself to be in His presence. However, this mortal life though is preparation for that future reality – and that when we become followers of King Jesus, our status changes through our union with Him, and the Holy Spirit begins a transforming work in our mortal bodies which prepares us for that future reality. Again, fellowship with Christ is eternal life both spiritually and physically. Therefore, what Paul is saying here is that:

*“He is not describing qualifications required for an entrance examination; he is comparing habitual actions, which by definition can find no place in God's reign for the welfare of all, with those qualities in accordance with which Christian believers need to be transformed if they belong authentically to God's new creation in Christ. Everything which persistently opposes what it is to be Christ-like must undergo change if those who practice such things wish to call themselves Christians and to look forward to resurrection with Christ.”* – Anthony Thiselton, biblical scholar

Now, in the ancient world and Greek philosophy, ethical lists were created based on being in harmony with the way of the universe (natural order of the universe). However, for Paul, ethics are to be in harmony with Christ. So, it's not abstract ethics that Paul is doing here, but a life aligned with God in Christ! What is listed here is out of harmony and not aligned with Him.

03-09-25

Pastor Grant Clay

Paul describes the people around them as “unrighteous” and then gets specific: 1 Cor. 6:9b-10 - Notice that Paul begins with sexually immoral and idolaters (similar to what he said in chapter 5). In the ancient world, idolatry and sexual immorality went hand in hand; the root of idolatry, and the root of sexual immorality, is aptly summed up by Paul in Romans 1: Rom. 1:24-25 - *It is exchanging the glory of the creator for the creation*. Now, this list is similar to what Paul mentions earlier in chapter 5, but with a few additions:

Adulterers, male prostitutes, men who practice homosexuality, and thieves. Some of your translations may also include male prostitutes. Leaving aside thieves for a moment, I want to focus on the sexual sins mentioned.

*Adultery* - According to Roman law, a woman who was caught in adultery could be put to death by her husband or even her father’s family. The betrayal aspect of the husband was different. His unfaithfulness was not considered adultery until he had sex with a virgin or a married woman. Moreover, he could have intercourse with female slaves or prostitutes – which was also often done. Such behavior was tolerated in [Roman society](#) until it “endangered the religious and legal integrity of the family”. Having a concubine was not a disgrace and was often mentioned on the tombstones. However, Paul condemns adultery in any form, without qualification (following the teachings of Jesus and the Old Testament).

*Same-sex relationships* - However, what do we do with the phrase: men who practice homosexuality? Now, some of your translations may say “male prostitutes”; others may “effeminate”, and “abusers of themselves with men.” The reason for this is there are actually two Greek words here that your ESV has put into one phrase, so this will take some unpacking. So, what is Paul saying and what does this text mean?

*Male prostitutes?* - The first is: *malakoi*. In some translations, this will be translated as “soft” or “effeminate” or “male prostitute”. So, what does this mean? In the ancient world, it was common for wealthy (male) patrons to have for themselves young male escorts. These younger men who would be the non-dominant partner in the relationship, and would often cross-dress (which is where the idea of effeminacy comes from). This was known as Pederasty – from where we get the word pedophilia from. *Men who practice homosexuality*

The second word is: *arsenoiketes*.

This one is trickier to translate. It’s a compound word which basically means *arsen* (male) and *koite* (bed) or to sleep with (with sexual force). So, it’s a man who sleeps/beds another man. You could say “man-sleeper” in a sexual sense. Now, some scholars say this word is so ambiguous, that you can’t put a specific definition on it and therefore it should not be used against a same-sex couple who are committed to one another in a monogamous relationship. However, there is another twist to this that helps us understand what Paul is most likely saying.

In Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, both of these words are used in the Greek translation called the Septuagint. Let me show you: “And you shall not lay *with a male* (arsenos) as with the *laying* (koiten) of a woman” (Lev. 18:22). “And whoever lays *with a male* (arsenos) with *laying* (koiten) of a woman” (Lev. 20:13)

The fact that Paul is a Jewish thinker, who knows his Old Testament (in Greek) it’s nearly impossible for me to think that this isn’t in some way reflective of his background. Furthermore, this same word shows up frequently in later Christian texts from church fathers to describe same-sex sexuality as something that God forbids.

*But what about loving same-sex relationships between consenting adults?*

Now some say that what is being forbidden here is exploitive relationships, not committed, loving ones by consenting adults. The problem with that view is that there were specific terms that Paul could have used to specify that – namely, the same word we get the word pedophile from. Paul doesn’t say that – he says *malakoi*, and *arsenoiketes*. And I think this reflects the wider biblical teaching, rooted in the Old Testament, which forbids same-sex relationships in whatever context – exploitive or consensual – they are happening in.

*Summary: the church's teaching on sexuality*

So, to be clear, the Old Testament and the New Testament, and ancient Judaism and historic Christianity, have recognized two genders created by God (male/female) and for our sexuality to be expressed in a marriage, as an institution created by God, which is intended to express the covenant union which God makes with His people (Christ and the church). Anything else is out of harmony with God's plan; out of harmony with the reality of our union with Christ.

*The real problem: Disordered desires of the "Flesh"*

Now, if you take all of these sins which Paul lists here, from greed/selfishness, injustice, deception, and sexual immorality in all of its forms, and you ask the question: what do they all have in common? What is the underlying theme? I would suggest that they are they are all some form of self-fulfillment, self-gratification, seeking to get or obtain something outside of the boundaries that God has provides.

Put another way, these vices are deemed "unrighteous" because they are driven by what Paul calls elsewhere the desires of the "flesh" – that is the desire to grasp things for ourselves apart from God's appointed design (again, idolatry and sexual immorality go hand in hand). Let me show you...

Gal. 5:16-21 - Very similar list to what we see here in 1 Corinthians. In Rom. 8, Paul states that those who are in the flesh and living by the flesh cannot please or submit to God.

Rom. 8:8 - So, in short, people ruled by the flesh, cannot inherit the kingdom of God because they are unwilling and unable to submit to God, because their hearts are ruled by the flesh. So, where is the hope? Well, Paul tells us here in verse 11:

1 Cor. 6:11 - What is Paul saying here? He is reminding them of who they are, and what God has done on their behalf in Jesus Christ! Why? Because it's as if they have forgotten who and what they are in Christ! Let's look at each of these briefly in turn:

Washed – *cleansed, forgiven, and made clean by the blood of Jesus*

Sanctified – *set-apart as God's own possession and made holy by the blood of Jesus*

Justified – *declared "righteous" in God's sight by the blood of Jesus*

Put another way:

*You are accepted!*

*You belong!*

*You have privileged status!*

In other words, IDENTITY INFORMS BEHAVIOR. As followers of Jesus, we are *people who have been given new desires for a new destiny: fellowship with Christ!* In other words, through Christ and the giving of the Spirit, we as God's people have been given new desires and a new destiny. Not one that is characterized by the corruption of the flesh, and a heart bent towards the selfishness, greed, immorality, but towards Christ, the telos of life! A genuine and real transformation has occurred in our lives and we now belong to Christ and He is making all things new!

**Main Idea:** *Under Christ's authority, God's people are no longer subject to the corruptive desires of the flesh. Instead, through the Spirit, they have been cleansed, justified, and set apart as His own holy possession.*

**Application:** **Your Desires are not your Destiny – Christ is!**

*Our cultural moment: expressive individualism*

Now, I want to stop here for just a moment and reflect on the cultural moment that we are living in. We have been taught for over a generation now, that the highest good, the most fulfilling thing we can experience as human beings is to live out the desires of our hearts, with no inhibitions or restraints. We also have churches that have built whole theologies around this philosophy, teaching that Jesus is here to affirm your desires, affirm

03-09-25

Pastor Grant Clay

your chosen identity, affirm your individuality and the real problem in our world is not the corrupted desires of our hearts, but the oppressive systems and structures of society that hold you back from expressing your true self to the world.

Now, if this were true – that expressive individualism is the path to true fulfillment, true freedom, and that the sexual revolution which began in earnest in 1960's as a fruit of this philosophy could bring life – then we should be the happiest, most fulfilled, most enlightened society on the face of the earth. But in fact, the exact opposite is true. We have higher rates of depression, mental health issues, suicide, violence, divorce, family breakdowns than at any time in our nation's history. Friends, expressive individualism, sexual freedom, living out the desires of your heart, is simply not working. The fruit is rotting, and shows up in the sexualization of children, the confusion over gender, and booming sex industry around the world that exploits and enslaves children, women, and destroys people's marriages and lives. And the reason it's not working is very simple: the desires of the human heart, ruled by the flesh, cannot produce the kind of fruit or life which God intended.

So, let's hear Paul's warning and let it have its full effect on our hearts and consciences this day: *those who practice such things, live in such a way, cannot and will not inherit the kingdom of God.* They are out of harmony with the way of Christ. Those who live by the flesh, will die in the flesh, and will do so apart from Christ.

Friend, if you are here this morning, and you are being ruled and overrun by desires of the flesh – maybe it's an obsession with control and having things (greed); maybe it's an obsession with getting your way, getting ahead no matter what the cost (swindler); maybe it's an obsession with food, or alcohol, or some kind of chemical drug (drunkard); maybe it's with pornography, or maybe even same-sex attraction – a secret you are afraid to let anyone know about. And you can feel the old life, pulling you back to its way; and maybe you feel like you are on the brink of falling back into the abyss of the ways of the flesh, hear again the words of Paul:

1 Cor. 6:11 - You have been given new desires, and a new destiny – you aren't in the old life; you are in Christ.

Listen to the words of Paul...Rom. 8:1-2 - *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.<sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.*