

Jason Upchurch - 1 Cor. 6:9-11 - No Vice Is Too Great For Jesus - Part 1

I hope our study this morning in the Word of Good is actually a huge encouragement to you. There is so much good stuff here that I trust you will be blessed. We will take this week and next week to work through this list.

It might sound odd to say that we will be blessed because you might also mark this passage down in your Bible as arguably the most offensive passage in our Bible to our culture. Our culture hates virtually every phrase and every word in this whole section.

This list of sins that we have here is often called a “vice list” - it’s a list of sins that are common and rampant and easily identifiable. There’s several vice lists in the Bible.

Keep a bookmark here and look over at **Rom. 1** for a moment. Here, Paul talks about the downfall of society being given over to sexual sin, then homosexual sin, then a debased mind. And he ends that section with a vice list. **Read 28-32**

Interestingly, in this vice list, it’s not just those who do the sin that are condemned. It’s those who applaud those doin the sin. It’s those who say “I’ll do me and you do you.” It’s those who encourage sinful behavior that maybe they don’t take part in. But they are encouraging the depravity of others. That’s basically every marketing campaign on TV and social media right now. Who can applaud the loudest and fastest at the latest round of depravity.

We’ll look more at Romans 1 a little later.

Look over at **1 Tim. 1:8-11**. Here the discussion is the value of using the OC Law as NC Christians. What is the value of the Law? It exposes people’s sin to them. If people don’t think they’re sinners, then they don’t need a Savior. Many times when we’re telling people about Jesus part of what we’re doing is simply to point out sinful things. That’s how God convicts the conscience for the need for salvation. **Read 8-11**

There are other vice lists. There’s the works of the flesh in **Gal. 5:19-21**. In **Rev. 21:8** there’s a list of people who won’t be in the New Heavens and New Earth: faithless, detestable, murderer, sexually immoral...cowards. Those who are cowards don’t make it into heaven.

2 Tim. 1:7: those in Christ haven’t been given a spirit of fear but of power and love and self-control.

1 John 4:18: And perfect love casts out fear.

I don’t know about you but sometimes I struggle with fear. Fear of man, fear of failure, fear of the unknown. That’s not from the Holy Spirit, that’s from my sinful flesh. Courage is taking the right action even when we are afraid.

Someone: Stop telling God about your fears and start telling your fears about our God!

Now, these vice lists are not listing the only sins that matter to God. They’re not even listing the “big sins” - I think more than anything they’re listing the common and obvious sins. Sins that every culture deals with.

And these sins and others, if not repented from through faith in Jesus, are sins that will be the indictment when God judges unbelievers on the last day.

Now, back in **1 Cor. 6**, why does Paul bring this up? This isn’t just a random list of sins for the sake of making a list. Remember he had just been talking about lawsuits among believers in the church at Corinth. These guys were essentially going to small claims court against each other over financial matters and they were bring shame on the gospel in doing so.

Unbelievers were watching these people who claimed to be followers of Jesus squabble about the most asinine things. **Read 1, 7**

And so our section this morning is a continuation of that argument. Unbelievers have no part in the true Kingdom of God. They are defined by their immorality and sinfulness but that's not how believers are defined.

That's the context. It's not just to take potshots at unbelievers, it's to show how Christ has transformed pagans into saints by the power of the Spirit. And they don't need to go back to the pagans to settle small financial disputes.

Now, here's the deal: if we're honest, we often come to these vice list passages to clobber unbelievers over the head and show them that their behavior is sin. That's actually not the primary point here.

The point is to show that the blood of Jesus can cleanse the most vile of sinners. The last verse is actually the controlling verse. **Read 11**

As such were some of you. Paul isn't saying Christians are any better than the pagans. He's saying that we were doing the same things and God in his mercy saved. God washed us, sanctified us, and justified us by the Spirit. We'll unpack those phrases next week.

But know that there is no sin or sinful pattern anyone has ever been in that is stronger than the grace of Jesus. No matter what a person has done, no matter what they've been involved in, through faith in the saving grace of Jesus, they can be clean.

John Newton, the author of Amazing Grace, said at the very end of his life: I know two things: I am a great sinner, and Jesus is a great Savior.

We sing the song his **Mercy is More:**
What love could remember no wrong we have done,
Omniscient, all-knowing he counts not their sum
Thrown into a sea without bottom or shore.
Our sins they are many, his mercy is more.

The grace of Jesus covers all sins to the fullest extent. So here's what I want to do: I want to talk about one hard truth and then I want to apply the grace and mercy of Jesus to each one of these sins.

Here's the hard truth: Those who don't repent from their sin, won't enter heaven. **Read 9**

We need to be really clear on this issue. Not everyone will enter the Kingdom. And not everyone who says they follow Jesus and loves Jesus will enter the Kingdom. Jesus said that on the last day many - many — will say to him "Lord, Lord, did we not cast out demons and do miracles and do mighty works for you?" And he will say I never knew you, depart from me you what? Workers of lawlessness.

There's a lot of people who claim the name of Jesus, who even go to church and know the Bible and who have been baptized and gone into ministry who will not be in heaven. Why?

Because they never repented from their sin.

John 3:36: Whoever believes in the Son has life, whoever does not obey the Son does not have life but the wrath of God remains on him.

Yes, we believe salvation is by faith alone in the death and resurrection of Jesus alone to forgive our sins and impute to us his righteousness. But the evidence of that faith is a transformed life that turns from sin in repentance. It's a life that is marked by obedience to Jesus.

That's why Paul says "do not be deceived." We need to be careful about this. See, the trouble isn't with worldly people doing worldly things. Or even Christian people acting like Christ. The trouble is people claiming to be Christian and continuing in a path of sinful living. That's the hard one where we can easily be deceived.

And especially when we know our own heart and our sin, it's often hard for us to look at others and go "no way they're in the Kingdom" because we feel like hypocrites.

But every Christian is going to sin - we all struggle with that. The issue is whether or not we acknowledge it, ask forgiveness, and turn from it.

But the deception is from those - and we all know them - who have claimed the name of Jesus, and would still consider themselves believers, who live a life that is defined by sin and disobedience. And we're reluctant to judge them or confront them with hard truths.

The deception is thinking they're believers. The truth is that the grace of God covers over sins and also gives us the ability to turn from that sin. So with that, let's look at these sins through the lens of grace.

1) The grace of Jesus washes away sexual immorality. Read 9

So this is a list that ends with "...will not inherit the Kingdom of God." The first on the list is "sexually immoral." The word in Greek is πόρνοι from which we get the word "pornography." The word is used a little loosely. It can be generic meaning all kinds of sexual sin, including prostitution or adultery or pre marital sexual immorality.

But here it seems to be more specific. It seems to be used specifically referring to sexual sin unmarried people might commit. I say that because 2 sins later Paul mentions adultery. Adultery is a married person seeking sexual gratification outside of his or her spouse.

Sexual immorality is prominent in our culture. But honestly it's been prominent in every culture since the dawn of time. If you read through the earliest chapters of the Bible you see all kinds of lewdness and immorality. History is filled with the same thing.

And I think if we're honest most of us have willfully sinned in this area. Some of the deepest shame and guilt and sadness come from sexual sin. Either our sin or other peoples' sin. Before we knew Christ we were sexually immoral in all kinds of ways that we don't even really need to talk about.

As such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified and you were justified in the name of Jesus Christ and by the power of the Spirit and our God.

The sexual sin we were part of might be in the table of contents of our life, but it's not the final chapter. That's what we **were**. That's the past. That's gone. We're not defined by it anymore. The gospel of Jesus washed us clean from all of it. We're new creations in Christ Jesus, trophies of God's grace. And the grace of Jesus covers over any and every sexual sin imaginable for the person who repents from sin and follows Jesus.

And let me tell you God has grace in spades. The deepest, darkest sin you've ever done and hope no one ever finds out. God knows, and in Christ, fully forgives it all.

2) The grace of Jesus washes away idolatry. Read 9

We don't think about idolatry a lot in our culture because we don't have trinkets. We don't have wooden carvings or little statues. We don't have Buddha dolls laying around.

But that's all just visible idolatry. Don't get me wrong, that's bad. But our idolatry is often much worse because it's subtle and it's the heart.

Look over at **Col. 3:5** for a minute. Colossae was a small town with a name that ironically meant "big." And Paul had planted a church there and this little letter has some of the most profound teachings about the Lord. And there is an amazing insight about idolatry here in **3:5. Read**

Covetousness is idolatry. That thing that you want and want and want and lose sleep over is likely an idol. An idol of the heart.

It can be a person: there's a person you want to impress or not let down and you think about them all the time. Maybe you want a husband or a wife or a baby or happy family gathering and you won't be content without it. Paul Tripp says a good thing can become a bad thing when it becomes a controlling thing. In other words, a good thing can become an idol when it controls you.

It can be a thing: your car, your video games, someone else's car or gadget. Tools, clothes, status, job, connections.

Or maybe it's that you're never content. You go from one thing to the next always thinking the next thing will bring you satisfaction and joy and it doesn't. On to the next and the next and the next and it's like having a diet of nothing but popcorn. You're filled up for 5 minutes but then you need more and more. Never content.

Maybe you desire to be popular - you want people to praise you or just not hate you.

Matthew Henry: it is...an inordinate love of present good and outward enjoyments, which...hinders the proper use and enjoyment of them, and creates anxious fear and immoderate sorrow for the loss of them...Covetousness is spiritual idolatry: it is the giving of that love and regard to worldly wealth which are due to God only, and carries a greater degree of malignity in it, and is more highly provoking to God, than is commonly thought."

What he's saying is that you can take a good thing - something God meant for us to enjoy - and if you place too high of a value on it it's idolatry.

John Calvin said the heart is a factory of idols. We churn new idols out by the truckload! That's why marketing departments have billions of dollars to spend.

But what does Paul say? But as such what? **Were** some of you. In Christ we are no longer defined by our idolatry. We're no longer defined by loving the things of this world. The trinkets, the people, the praise. We have been given a proper understanding of how we are to love and enjoy God's creation.

The things that are good, we enjoy knowing they are from God. We are not owed them, but they are his gifts to us. The things that are evil, we realize we don't want those things anyway. Our hearts have been aligned to his heart.

And because we have the Lord who will never leave us nor forsake us - the Lord who is our Shepherd - we shall not want. We serve the Lord who gives and takes away. The Lord who has given us an inheritance better than all the earthly treasure imaginable.

The Lord who is so amazing that if somehow - like Job - everything in our lives were stripped away, is so good and so amazing we could still rise up in praise to him. We are no longer idolaters. We are worshippers of the one true and living God.

What's next on Paul's list? Let's **look** back to **1 Cor. 6. Read 9**

3) The grace of Jesus washes away adultery.

As I mentioned before, the term adultery here - μοιχοὶ - refers specifically to someone who is unfaithful to their spouse. This is sexual sin that violates the marriage covenant. It's actually a word that is often used of those who claim to be followers of God but form a habit of deliberate sin and therefore are unfaithful to him.

James 4:4: You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with who? God.

Those who love the world are unfaithful to God. But that picture is taken from the severe, sinful tragedy of marital unfaithfulness. Violating the marriage covenant, frankly, is something the unbelieving world applauds

and encourages. Movies are made out of it. Songs glorify it. It is normalized and incentivized and laughed at in Romantic Comedies. It's a fling. It's an affair. It's no big deal.

No, it's forsaking the wife of our youth. It's forsaking the husband of our youth. It's a violation of our vow to God to forsake all others.

But. What? You were washed. You were sanctified. You were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of our God.

You were cleansed and declared righteous by every member of the triune Godhead. Is adultery bad? Of course. It will be the reason many do not enter the Kingdom of heaven. But it's not the unpardonable sin. It's a sin that the blood of Jesus easily forgives.

4) The grace of Jesus washes away homosexuality. **Read 9**

I want to spend the remaining time we have on this one vice because it's so important given what's going on in our society right now. And I'm going to keep this discussion PG rated because we have kids. I will say you need to talk with your children frankly about these issues.

There are many public school districts that begin teaching kindergartners about these issues. Drag queen story hour for the little kids is now common place. This is no area for us to be timid. We need to teach our kids.

By the way, one the best ways to teach your kids is simply read the Bible. Just read through Genesis and it'll touch on a host of issues.

We need to do this because, as you know, the sin of homosexuality has come to be the defining discussion of our day. You can't read a newspaper or hear a news report without someone talking about LGBTQI+ rights. Trans women, trans men. "People who give birth" so on. Men dominating in women's sports. Religious adoption agencies getting shut down by the state. On and on.

Turn to Rom. In Romans 1, we read that there is something of a downward spiral of depravity that happens in a society. God gives people over to their sexual sin, then he gives them over to their homosexual sin. And the rock bottom is when he gives them over to a debased mind where people basically invert all morality. **Read 24-29**

None of what we see is new. This has been going on for all of human history. Sodom and Gomorrah are talked about in **Genesis 18**. The sin there is so rampant the entire city is taking part in that wickedness. If our societies degradation is anything like theirs, it had been an issues for a long, long time before. Many scholars believe that the sin Ham and Canaan committed against their father, Noah, in **Genesis 9** were of homosexual nature.

As Christians we don't need to be afraid to address these issues in a helpful way. The Bible addresses all of these. LGBTQI+

Lesbian - is a just a type of homosexuality where women exchange the natural desire for unnatural ones -
Romans. 1:26

Gay - is just homosexuality among men. By the way, the word that is used here in most of our Bibles "homosexuality" is actually 2 words in Greek. And the two words distinguish the active and passive participants in a homosexual relationship. In ancient times they made a distinction - we don't so much anymore. But the reality is that even in a homosexual relationship there tends to be the "man" and the "woman" in the relationship. Same thing with lesbian relationships. This is nothing new.

LGB - Bisexual is also just a form of homosexuality. And without getting into details, you need to understand this was rampant in Roman times and in some areas just considered normal.

What about T? T stands for transgender. And it's especially egregious because not only does it express itself in homosexual behavior, but it is a rejection of God's design of making male and female in his image. It's rejecting that God is the Creator and made male with certain equipment, and female with certain equipment and that he desires we utilize how we've been made in the way he made us.

Did you know there are laws against transgender behavior in the Bible? **Look** back at **Deut. 22:5** for a minute. Cross dressing, transgender, drag queens - these things are nothing new. Solomon says there is nothing new under the sun. These sins did not develop 5 years ago with Obergefell v. Hodges. **Read**

Let's be clear, the issue here is not fashion or kids playing dress up. It's not whether boys can play with dolls or girls can play with GI Joes. The issue is a male person dressing in a way that a woman would typically dress because they attempting to live the part of a woman.

Ancient Hebrews didn't have terms like transgender or cis gender or sexuality or spectrum. They knew when a man was trying to play the part of a woman or vice versa. And it was an abomination.

As for Q and + and the whole spectrum, most of it is just some form of sexual confusion or social conformity to the craziness of our time. This is God giving us over to a depraved mind.

These are sins that God calls people to repent of. As such **were** some of you.

There were people in Corinth who had come out of the sin of homosexuality. They had been saved by the grace of God. They had been washed and sanctified and justified. They were no longer defined by that sin. They were no longer stained with the guilt and shame of that sin. They were released from that sin.

See, part of the problem with people saying "they're born that way" is 1) there's no science to support that and 2) that means there's no ability to change either. If you're born that way then you can't repent and you're stuck. The gospel says there's no sin so severe, no lifestyle so wretched, no depravity so great that Jesus can't reach down, pull us from the mire and wash us white as snow. We go from a 1950's car rusting in the junk yard to full restoration with new car smell in Christ.

This sin is no different. Maybe there's some of you who left that sin. Praise God.

And let me touch on one other aspect here that is important. What if you're a believer who struggles with what is commonly called same-sex attraction? Just because you leave a sinful lifestyle doesn't mean the sinful desire evaporates overnight. Just like when a man and woman get married heterosexual temptation doesn't evaporate overnight, neither does same sex attraction. We live in a sin stained world and sometimes sin takes a long time to put off.

But by the grace of God we can. As believers we need to make sure people understand that the Bible does not teach that homosexuality is the unpardonable sin. Because you know what? It is very much pardonable. For all those who repent from their sin, and trust in Christ, they are made new.

His grace covers all these sins in full. That his glorious grace might be praised.

Pray