

"Know Ye Not ...?"

This expression is distinctively from Paul. He uses these words in many of his letters and has already it earlier in this one (5:6) and will in this chapter use it not less than six times (1 Cor. 6:2, 3, 9, 15, 16, 19). Thus we read, "*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abuses of themselves with men, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of You: but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God*" (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Corinth was a moral "cesspool" differing only in degree from the major cities of the empire. The presence of tolerance for the incestuous brother; their lawsuits with one another; their divisions over men; their questions about marriage; their unconcern for the conscience of weak brethren concerning the eating of meats offered to idols; their desire for the showy "tongue gift;" doubts about the resurrection (all this and more), shows a church which had a long way to go in separating itself from the world around.

Paul lists ten glaring sins which would keep those who practiced them from inheriting the kingdom of God. And, no doubt Paul had not exhausted the list of unrighteousness. In his list to Galatians of the "*works of the flesh*" which, when practiced, would keep such an one from inheriting the kingdom of God, Paul lists fifteen wicked and even these did not say such things embraced them all for he added "*and such like.*" In his list of works of the flesh to Corinth, four were explicitly sexual sins with a fifth tainted by such deeds (idolatry) -- half his list in fact dealt with sexual uncleanness. Yet in the context the wrong he wrote against (law suits with brethren) would be condemned as "*coveteousness.*"

Paul served noticed to these careless, uncaring Corinthians that he unrighteous would "*not inherit the kingdom of God.*" Bear in mind that while Jesus equates the kingdom with the church (Matt. 16:18-20) and Paul acknowledged that the Colossians had been delivered from the power of darkness and "*translated into the kingdom of the son of his love*" (Col. 1:13), the "*kingdom of God*" does not refer exclusively to the church; in its future sense it has reference to all the redeemed through the ages -- the place Jesus said He went to prepare for us (Jn. 14:1-3). Paul, in referring to the kingdom of God in a future sense (here in 1 Cor. 6:11 and in Gal. 5:21); only followed his Master in such a reference. Did not Jesus speak of the great judgment at the world's end and in speaking of the redeemed on His

right hand said, *"Come, ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"* (Mt. 25:34). Peter, who heard the Olivet discourse on the destruction of Jerusalem, as well as the parables given by Jesus following that discourse, wrote near the end of his life that should God's people be careful to add the seven Christian graces, they would never stumble and would have richly supplied to them *"an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ"* (2 Pet. 1:11). All these references to the eternal kingdom; the kingdom of God, point to the eternal rest in heaven when the victorious one would attain the crown of righteousness, a crown Paul greatly desired (2 Tim. 4:8).

Paul's warning underscores the truth that the doctrine that *"once one is saved, he is always saved"* is the devil's lie. God people must live *"soberly, righteously and godly"* (Ti. 2:11). They must come out and be separate (2 Cor. 6:17). They must wash and keep their robes clean in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7:14). Sinless perfection? Hardly! The wise man wrote, *"There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not"* (Eccl. 7:20). Paul warned that *"all have sinned and come short of the glory of God"* (Rom. 3:23). John wrote, *"If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us"* and *"If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us"* (1 Jn. 1:8, 10). Then he added, *"These things write I unto you that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins and not for our only, but also for the whole world"* (1 John 2:1-2).

Let us be sober, seeking to keep our garments clean. Consider that Satan tempts and sometimes we fall, but may we maintain a good heart that pricks us when we do so that we will try in repentance and confess our sins to our God. He forgives when we do (1 Jn. 1:9).

Jim McDonald