

“And Such Were Some of You”

Introduction. The title above is derived from the first phrase in 1 Corinthians 6:11. In context, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 occurs right after the discussion of the error of brethren taking each other to court. Going to law with one another is linked with being “unrighteous,” along with a host of other sins in vv. 9-10.

The verses serve as a reminder that many individuals who have become Christians have come from deeply sinful backgrounds and have been forgiven greatly. This section is particularly significant because it emphasizes that it’s Christ who has made the forgiveness of sins possible.

Our study will focus on the statement in verse 11: “And such were some of you.” To me, this statement speaks volumes. There’s four words in the phrase that teach a lot about sin and presents an opportunity about how to overcome it.

I. “Such”

- A. In context, this word means “of like manner.” After reading the list of sins from vv. 9-10, some might be inclined to look down on others and say, “I wouldn’t want to be around people like that!” Paul’s statement reminds the Corinthians that this church was made up of people who had committed such sins, but were now forgiven (v. 11).
 - 1. Historically, Corinth was known for its immorality. Those in the first century who engaged in drunkenness and immorality were said to “live like a Corinthian.”
 - 2. It was in this immoral climate that Paul entered Corinth and preached the gospel, converting many to Christ (Acts 18:8; 1 Corinthians 1:14-16).
 - 3. In fact, God told Paul, “I have many people in this city” (Acts 18:10). For this reason, Paul stayed there for 1.5 years, preaching the Word and converting many to Christ.
- B. There’s no question that the Corinthian Christians were guilty of various sins. We know that such behavior was encouraged in their society, but these people learned better through the preaching of the gospel.

II. “Were”

- A. In its context, “were” is an amazing and powerful word. Though the people were guilty of sin (including sins listed in our passage), they had since followed God’s plan for salvation and had been forgiven in Christ. They had repented (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30) and been baptized (Acts 18:8; cp. Galatians 3:26).
- B. No one can fully escape their past. Even Paul, though forgiven and looking forward to a “crown of righteousness” (2 Timothy 4:6-8), said he was the “chief of sinners” when he reflected upon his past (1 Timothy 1:15).

III. “Some”

- A. This word makes it clear that the sins listed in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 entangled the members of the Corinthian church.
- B. This entanglement is significant for three reasons:

1. It says something about Paul, who went to Corinth.
 - a) He was willing and ready to preach the gospel to whoever would listen (Romans 1:15-16). He understood Christ's words to preach the gospel to "every creature" (Mark 16:15), and this includes preaching to people who've committed some of the most heinous sins.
 - b) They needed forgiveness just as Paul did and as we all do. Yet, they couldn't be forgiven until they were told what to do (Mark 16:16; cp. Acts 9:6; 22:16). When this happened, people accepted the truth and were "washed," "sanctified," and "justified."
2. It also tells us that people in sin can come out of it and do right.
 - a) The list of sins in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, as well as similar lists in other passages, are there as a reminder that God has a standard for all of us. He expects us to come out of those sins and live righteously.
 - b) Sometimes, coming out of sin is very difficult, so I want to show you some practical ways to do that:
 - (1) Develop greater faith in God (Proverbs 3:5-6).
 - (2) Acknowledge and confess sin (1 John 1:9).
 - (3) Repent, don't just regret (2 Corinthians 7:10).
 - (4) Renew your mind (Romans 12:2).
 - (5) Remove access and triggers (Matthew 5:29-30).
 - (6) Walk by the Spirit, not willpower alone (Galatians 5:16-17).
 - (7) Replace, don't just remove (Ephesians 4:22-24).
 - (8) Seek good counsel (Proverbs 24:6).
 - (9) Build accountability (James 5:16).
 - (10) Be patient in the process of overcoming sin (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).
 - c) We're told that sin is a "disease," or is embedded in genetic code. This is wrong. This passage makes it clear that regardless of the sin under consideration, someone can be forgiven when they willingly listen to and truly obey the gospel (Hebrews 5:8-9).
3. It indicates that God considered this church as "His" even though it was made up of former sinners (1 Corinthians 1:2).
 - a) Truly, God's forgiving, loving, and "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).
 - b) When these saints repented of sins, anyd were baptized into Christ, God accepted them and added them to His church (Acts 2:38, 47).
 - (1) From that point, someone must "be faithful until death" (Revelation 2:10; cp. Hebrews 3:14; James 1:12).
 - (2) This means they take sanctification seriously and walk in holiness (1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; Romans 6:22; 2 Corinthians 7:1).

IV. "Of You"

- A. This phrase speaks not only to the Corinthians but also to the other readers of this letter. May all Christians beware of arrogance and pride (cp. Luke 18:11). You may have been guilty of the very sins mentioned here. No one can say that they've never sinned (1 John 1:10).

- B. Therefore, let no one look down on someone who repents of sin and is baptized or is restored as an erring Christian (1 John 1:9; cp. Acts 8:22). We, like the Corinthians, need to be “washed, sanctified, and justified.” And we will be when we do only what God says.

Conclusion. There are some strong lessons imparted by this passage. In many respects, we resemble the Corinthians, necessitating a reminder of our origins and our identity in Christ. Had it not been for His intervention, we would have no hope (Ephesians 2:11-22). Simultaneously, we are reminded not to belittle others in their sin but instead provide them with assistance to extricate themselves from their predicament by imparting the gospel that we have acquired (2 Timothy 2:2). Our job on earth is to show sufficient concern in disseminating the truth so that others can be “washed, sanctified, and justified.”

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