Pentecost 4 1 Corinthians 6:9-11
July 3, 2022 617-618-389/620-619

Don't Let Anyone Fool You!

I. About the power of sin to eternally damn us.
II. About the power of the gospel to save and change us.

Dear Christian friends,

As you heard this reading were you perhaps thinking, I **know some people** who REALLY NEED to hear this!" But it's NOT JUST certain people who **need to hear** this. Paul wrote this TO CHRISTIANS about THEIR **Christian lives**.

These verses FIRST SPEAK to **you and me** and then to the world. The message **for you** – for **me** – for **all** people – is REAL SIMPLE – ***"Don't be deceived."*** DON'T LET ANYONE FOOL YOU 1)about the power of sin to **eternally damn** us and 2)**about the power** of the gospel to save and change us.

I. About the power of sin to eternally damn us.

"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?" That's Paul POLITELY SAYING, "Come on, people, you ALREADY KNOW that the **wicked** aren't going to heaven." They KNEW THIS but they were living as if there are EXCEPTIONS to this.

Paul takes us back to some **very** BASIC TRUTHS of the Bible. When a person dies they GO EITHER to heaven or hell. There is no other place! **Heaven** and **hell** are BOTH REAL – **both** are eternal – and real people LIKE YOU and me really do go to heaven or hell. People in hell **spend eternity** WITH THE DEVIL forever banished from **God's presence** – **forever** punished. **People in heaven** spend eternity WITH GOD forever enjoying God's **love** and **goodness** and **blessings** and **presence**. There are ONLY TWO PLACES to spend eternity – ONLY TWO KINDS of people in the world – Christians and **unbelievers** – all those who trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior and all the rest **with whatever** they may or may not believe. ***"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned."*** We ALREADY KNOW that but are we taking that SERIOUSLY? Or do we try to make EXCEPTIONS for **ourselves** – our friends – our **families**?

"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?" Instead of doing what's right IN GOD'S SIGHT the ***"unrighteous"*** do WHAT GOD SAYS is **wrong**. Here's **another** BASIC TRUTH of the Bible – God determines right and wrong **with** HIS 10 Commandments. Something may FEEL SO RIGHT to us that we think it COULDN'T POSSIBLY be wrong but if God says **it's wrong** then **it's wrong**. We have no right to IGNORE or DEFY our **Creator**. He's God – we're not!

MINDFUL of these basic truths Paul goes on – ***"Do not be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral*** (having sex before or outside of marriage)***, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor males who have sex with males*** (the same goes about women with women)***, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor the verbally abusive, nor swindlers*** (people who cheat and rip off other people including the government, their employers, employees, etc.) ***will inherit the kingdom of God."*** People LIVING LIKE THAT show they're REALLY NOT Christians. They may think they're Christians but GOD SAYS they're not. DON'T LET **anyone fool** you! Society – **Hollywood** – **TV** – the **government/Supreme Court** – other churches – our friends may HAVE NO PROBLEMS with these sins but GOD DOES. God says people living like that ARE GOING to hell.

Paul didn't write this as an ALL-INCLUSIVE list **as if** ONLY these sins will bar a person from heaven – **as if** these are the REALLY BIG sins and other sins like **gossiping** or **speeding** or **holding grudges** or **picking** on someone AREN'T SO BAD. These were sins commonly accepted in Corinth. Here's another basic truth of the Bible – **just because** EVERYBODY ELSE is doing something doesn't mean GOD APPROVES of it.

Let's be clear about ANOTHER BASIC truth of the Bible. It's NOT THESE PARTICULAR sins that actually condemn a person to hell – it's their unbelief – their IMPENITENCE. The Bible distinguishes between FALLING into a sin and repenting of it **versus** LIVING IN a sin – the difference between STRUGGLING with a sin and PERSISTING in a sin and refusing to change. THAT DIFFERENCE is contrition or **repentance**. **Contrition** is BEING SORRY and bothered by our sins. No Christian is **perfect**. Every day we fall into **all kinds** of sins – sadly often the **same** sin again and again. The Christian life is one of DAILY repenting of our sins. But to EXCUSE our sins – to expect God to UNDERSTAND and **accept** our sins – that's not **being sorry** for them. A Christian may STRUGGLE with **drinking** too much – **looking** at pornography – **gossiping** about others or whatever other sin but that STRUGGLE SHOWS he doesn't want **to do** the sin. That's TOTALLY DIFFERENT from the person living in and comfortable with **whatever** sin. DON'T LET anyone fool you about the power of sin to **eternally damn** us. Those who LIVE UNREPENTANT in whatever their sin may be ***"will not inherit the kingdom of God."*** They're going to hell. They're not Christians. GOD SAYS SO.

We can see that difference in **King Manasseh** in the OT reading and the woman in the gospel reading. Simon the **Pharisee** knew all about that woman's **sinful ways** but he didn't see ANY REAL or MAJOR SINS that he personally needed to repent of. **Because** he couldn't or wouldn't FACE UP to his **own damning sins** he couldn't understand or treasure the **gospel**. But DON'T LET ANYONE fool you…

II. About the power of the gospel to save and change us.

Paul had reminded these Corinthian Christians that ***"the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God."*** After listing SOME EXAMPLES of **sinful lifestyles** Paul also remind them, ***"And some of you were those types of people." "Some"*** of them had once lived in those GLARING SINS. All Christians are **sinners** but we don't all commit the **same** sins. Some Christians may NEVER have done **what Paul lists** here as examples. Their sins may NOT BE AS OBVIOUS or disgusting but they're still sin IN GOD'S EYES.

"Some of you WERE those types of people." That was part of their PAST but **not** their PRESENT lives. What brought about SUCH a **change**? Paul had preached the gospel to them. Back in chapter 2 Paul had written, ***"When I came to you …I resolved to nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."*** DON'T LET ANYONE fool you about the power of the gospel to **save** and **change** us. They ***"were"*** that – ***"but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."***

"You were washed." Sin makes us DIRTY – **stinky** – **smelly** in God's sight. No matter how hard we may SCRUB ourselves and try to CLEAN UP our lives and make ourselves presentable to God we just can't pass **God's inspection**. But we ***"were washed"*** BY God Himself IN Holy Baptism. Go back to the BASIC TRUTHS about Baptism. Baptism is ALL GOD'S DOING for us. In that ***"washing of water and the Word"*** God ***"washed away our sins"*** in Jesus' blood – that ***"blood of God's Son, that cleanses us from all sin."*** In Baptism God clothed us with Jesus' own perfect life – God adopted us as His children – promised us eternal life in heaven. **In Baptism** God brought us to faith in Jesus as our Savior. Those blessings of Baptism are for us to LIVE AND ENJOY **every day** of our lives. We ***"were"*** ONCE unbelievers and slaves of sin and Satan but NOW IN Jesus we are God's dear children and heirs of heaven. Oh, WHAT GRACE!

"You were sanctified." Sanctify means to **make holy** – to SET APART from the ordinary and FOR GOD'S USE and GLORY. Washed clean of all our sins in Jesus' blood and clothed with Jesus' perfect life God NOW SEES us not as ***"unrighteous"*** but as holy people – as SAINTS! Not just an hour a week is SET ASIDE for God – our whole life is SET ASIDE – dedicated to God. It's not that we're CHRISTIANS HERE at church and then the rest of the week we **live however** we want. We can't separate our faith from ANY PART of our lives. ***"Sanctified"*** – SET APART from our old sinful ways and TO our **gracious God** now we're CHRISTIAN husbands/wives – **Christian** parents/children –

Christian brothers/sisters – **Christian** farmer/worker/neighbor/friend, etc. ***"Sanctified"*** – SET APART – we now want to talk and live and think AS CHRISTIANS and not as the unbelievers we **once were**. Again, WHAT GRACE!

"You were justified." Justified is a legal term – a judge pronouncing a person **innocent** – **not guilty** – of all charges. AS SINNERS we were charged with breaking **God's** laws. The evidence against us was **overwhelming**. We're not talking a LITTLE SIN here and there but being born sinful and sinning day after day in **countless ways**. Conviction carried the ETERNAL **death sentence**. Ours looked like an OPEN AND SHUT case but we have a **court-appointed** defense attorney – God's own eternal Son. Jesus doesn't plead our case by DENYING or EXCUSING our sins. The evidence He presents **in our defense** is everything He did IN OUR PLACE. Jesus perfectly loved and obeyed His heavenly Father His whole life through – all the way to the cross. Bearing the sins of the whole world Jesus suffered and died on that cross – enduring the hell and **punishment** we had coming. Yes, Jesus took care of **everything** AS PROVED BY His resurrection on Easter morning. God the Father has pronounced the **verdict**. FOR JESUS' SAKE He ***"justifies"*** us – declares us **not guilty** of ALL CHARGES. **For Jesus' sake** we are forgiven – FULLY – FREELY. Again, WHAT GRACE!

All this – ***"washed – sanctified – justified"*** – is all ***"in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God."*** It's all because of Jesus' perfect life – His innocent death – His triumphant resurrection. It's all because THROUGH the gospel the Holy Spirit worked saving faith in our hearts and He now helps us DAILY LIVE our **Christian faith**. WHAT GRACE!

It's the BASIC TRUTH that the gospel is God's power to SAVE and CHANGE us. We don't take **God's forgiveness** as God's PERMISSION to **keep on** sinning. God's **grace** becomes our motivation to now STRIVE TO LIVE – **God-pleasing** – **God-centered** lives. Rather than wallowing in our **sinful ways** we WANT TO THANK God for saving us from our sins. Our trying to live a **holy life** will NEVER SAVE us but it does show that **our faith** is REAL and **not just** EMPTY WORDS.

DON'T LET ANYONE fool you – there are no substitutes for **that gospel**! Amen.

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