

Living As Those Made Holy (1 Cor 6:1-11)

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[0 : 00] So if any of you has a dispute with one another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord's people?

Or do you not know that the Lord's people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life? Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, do you ask for a ruling from those whose way of life is scorned in the church? I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? But instead, one brother takes another to court, and this in front of unbelievers.

The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?

[1 : 01] Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers and sisters. Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived.

Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who have sex with men, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.

And that is what some of you were. But you were washed. You were sanctified. You were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. And that is the Word of God. Thank you. Sorry about that. We're right. You've been working through 1 Corinthians as a church, and by now you would have worked out that Paul is very, very good at nailing the church in Corinth to its sins.

He's really good at it, isn't he? And you guys ought to be really thankful that you've got General William as your pastor, and not old Paul, because he does nail it to them, doesn't he?

[2 : 17] And he does that right here. But as you've been working through 1 Corinthians, you will have picked up three very important things. First of all, you will have seen that the church at Corinth is not the ideal church.

If you've been looking for a church, would you have joined it? No? Well, Paul says he wants to have fellowship with these people. And he loves them.

And he loves them. So maybe you need to think carefully about what sort of church is a perfect church. But along with that, of course, we know that they were a bit like us.

Now, of course, we were not, surely nobody here is as guilty of the horrendous sins you looked at last week. It was just awful, wasn't it?

And, you know, Paul says, no one who does that is going to get to heaven. And then today he adds, no one who is covetous.

[3 : 22] Is that the word being used here? Or greedy? And he puts greed and stuff in the same category. So we've got a problem, people.

Because, I mean, I don't know you well, and it's one of the wonderful things about visiting churches. You don't know them, so you can say all sorts of stuff. But my guess is that some of you are greedy. No? Oh, okay. Which means, Paul has put you in the same category as those horrendous sinners you looked at last week.

Ooh. The second thing you would have noticed as you're going through here is that Corinth was a pretty idolatrous and lost city. Just like Auckland.

Yeah. We haven't got a temple in the top of Queen Street. We haven't got idols scattered around. We just take the shortcut and worship money.

[4 : 26] And success. And peace. And houses. And careers. And, yeah. Are we any different? But the third thing you would have noticed is that as Paul deals with these issues, he brings every one of them back to the gospel and to Christ.

every single time. And he does that in today's passage. So I'm going to pray and then we're going to get into it. Our Father, as we bow before you, we ask that you would help us to bend to your spirit, to humble ourselves before the creator who is our friend, the sovereign Lord of time and the universe who is our saviour, the king of kings who is our friend.

Lord, lead us as we turn to your word now, we pray. Amen. Amen. Paul has taken everything so far back to Christ.

And, in fact, I want you to turn in your Bibles to verse 11 of the passage we've just looked at. Washed, sanctified, justified.

At the end of the passage, he puts the whole of this section into its context. He's saying, Corinthians, you are washed. Now, I'm sure you're quite pleased that people next to you are washed.

[6 : 18] It doesn't make for good fellowship, does it, if people don't wash. Howic Baptist, we've been going through Nehemiah, and when the enemy attacked, they stayed dressed in their working clothes for 56 days on end.

No, we don't want that. But Paul isn't talking about that. He's talking about our being washed from sin. And that's really important because he's going to deal with the idea of sin and he's saying, you've been washed.

It shouldn't be there. Right? I don't know that many of you are parents, but some are. And, you know, you send your kids off before dinner to get washed and then come back and say, show me your hands.

You've been there, haven't you? You show your hands and you keep them closed because you don't want to open them up. Right? When you're washed, it's all gone. If it's been properly washed, Christ has washed us.

He's sanctified us. What does that mean? It means he set us aside for himself. We, who are Christians, belong to him.

[7 : 33] By our choice, no. He has sanctified us. He has said, you are mine. And thirdly, he said, we're justified. We are justified.

We are right with God. So why would we bring sin into it? It's a dumb question, isn't it?

Some of you are probably married. Some of you are, I'm sure. Others of you are hoping to get married. Can you imagine a married life when you're sitting there saying, dearest, I just don't want to be right with you.

It's not going to work, is it? So why do you do it with God? That's Paul's question. So, that's the setting. Let's look at what Paul is saying in this first section, verses one through to eight.

He's saying, stop disputing. In fact, I think that Paul is saying something even stronger than what we've got here.

[8 : 41] He says, do you dare to take your dispute to the ungodly? And to be honest, I think he's saying, how dare you take your dispute to the ungodly?

Why would you do that? And then while you're looking at verse six, put your finger, sorry, verse one, put your finger on verse six too. But instead, one brother takes another to court and this in front of unbelievers.

What's going on here? Paul, last week's passage, was saying the church should discipline those who are unfaithful.

This week, Paul is saying, you need to discipline yourself. Do you see that? He's not saying discipline the others in the church. He's saying, why are you having a dispute with others?

Now, as I was preparing this sermon, I was picturing this church and I was sort of thinking, you'd have five or six people right over there and then you'd have another five or six people right over by that door and the first thing you'd do is say, what's going on here?

[9 : 54] And the answer is, well, they don't want to sit together. They're brothers and sisters in Christ but they can't get on. But this is worse than that. Paul says, they're taking each other to court.

Now, quite clearly, this is something serious. Those of you who are law students know that you can't take a suit at court for somebody singing the wrong hymn. Right?

Or not having the right flower arrangement. Now, this is serious stuff and yet, it does happen amongst Christians. It was happening in Corinth. If it doesn't happen in this church, it will. That's not a prophecy. That's just a reality. Right? You will have friends you fall out with and you will fall out with them over serious stuff and I will guarantee every time that happens, you are right. Of course you're right. And the problem is that when you're right, you won't back off, will you? And so the Corinthians were taking these disputes to the courts.

[11 : 02] Right? Your honour, this is my brother in Christ. He's evil. He's evil. Yes, it happens.

Now, let me put here a little warning. Paul is not talking about criminal behaviour. He's not talking about sexual abuse or theft.

He's not talking about crimes. Let's be very clear where those things happen, the law needs to be involved. And if it's you, get hold of your pastor and say, Pastor, we need to go down to the police station and get this sorted.

Or if it's a friend, sit with them, pray with them and say, you need to go and I'll come with you. But there is absolutely no place for truly criminal behaviour, especially that which offends against the safety and welfare of others.

No place at all. There's no excuse for hiding it, for covering it up, saying we'll pray about it and it'll go away. Deal with it. But Paul here is dealing with something else. He's dealing with something that quite likely involves money.

[12 : 18] Because he says, wouldn't you rather be defrauded? Do you lend money? Do you lend stuff to people? Do you do things for people? Of course you do. And then they don't pay it back or they return it in lots of pieces.

And what do you do about it? Well, that's the issue Paul is dealing with here. And he's saying, don't take that to the ungodly. And then in verse 2, do you not know that the Lord's people will judge the world?

Verse 3, don't you know that you will judge the angels? I haven't got a clue what he means. I really cannot get my head around the idea that we will judge the world.

I know Christ will. And somehow, in God's wisdom and economy, we will be involved in that. Paul says, don't you know it? Well, no, until I read this passage, I didn't.

And now that I've read this passage, I know it, but I have no idea what it means and what it involves and nowhere else in Scripture can I find any answer. If you go to a few books, I'll tell you.

[13 : 28] I don't know where they get the answer from, but every book I read has a different answer, so don't trust the books. And the fact is, we don't have to know, do we? Because Paul is not here giving us a doctrine of our judgment on the last day.

He's saying, since you are going to judge the world, how come you can't sort out something as little as \$10,000 your mate owes you? Did you get that?

As little as something in this world. How come you can't forgive your brother for wrecking your car? or taking your girlfriend?

Or whatever. Right? You with me? Paul is saying, surely if you're going to judge the world, do you see what he calls it? A trivial case.

In terms of the world, it's a trivial case. In terms of eternity, it's not even a blink of the eye. And you're going to judge angels?

[14 : 34] Now, that truly is mind-boggling. Isn't it? You and I, at some point, are going to be involved in judging the angelic beings.

Staggering. So, how much more should you be able to judge things in this life? If you're going to be able to deal with that, surely you can sort this out.

So Paul is saying to us, no, you need to do it yourself. And then, look at verse 4. If you have disputes about such matters, do you ask for a ruling from those whose way of life is scorned in the church?

I mean, that's what you would do, wouldn't it? Saying, I've got this dispute with my sister. I need someone to help. Who is the most despicable lawyer I know? Who is the most unreliable judge in the country?

Where can I find a tribunal whose rulings have never made sense? Oh, no, no, I'll go further. I will find someone who hates Christ and Christians.

[15 : 41] Really? And then Paul has the audacity to say this. Why don't you find the least significant person in the church and ask them to sort it for you?

Now, there's a challenge. I suggest that most of our disputes get sorted pretty quickly. If that was the only way to solve them, we'd say, oh, no, no, no. But seriously, do you see what he's saying? He's saying the least significant, important person in this church is better equipped to help you solve your problems than a judge in the high court in New Zealand or anywhere.

No, don't take it to the court because if you do, look at verse 7, you are already defeated. Even if you win the case, you're defeated because you have lost your brother or your sister.

How can that be in the body of Christ? how can it be that we have this difficulty? I've just got something that's not working properly here, but never mind.

[17:01] We're back again. How can it be that you, God's people, can have a dispute that goes unresolved?

instead, he says in verse 8, be willing to be cheated.

Got that? You are better off to be cheated or to be wronged than to pursue this dispute. Now, he was saying to me, oh, that's a bit hard.

Again, we go back to the point, don't we, that you're right. I know you are. You wouldn't be hanging on to it if you weren't. It wouldn't be a matter of dispute if you weren't right.

And your friend wouldn't be hanging on to it if they weren't right. So, the solution, Paul says, is be wronged. Be willing to be wronged.

[18:07] Don't hang on to your rights. say, say, I would rather lose. I would rather be disgraced. I would rather be embarrassed.

I would rather suffer than for this dispute to go another day, another hour, another minute. Would you turn, if you've got your Bible, through to me, with you, to John 15?

you will remember that Jesus was asked at one stage, what were the two greatest commandments? And what did he say?

Well, he went right back to Deuteronomy when the Mosaic law was being given, and he said, the first is this, love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your strength.

And the second is like unto it, love your neighbour as yourself. And then in John 13 that we read a little while ago, or referred to, John 17, sorry, 15, we have the same statement.

[19:10] We have Jesus saying, this is the commandment that I give you. But notice two things. First of all, he says, this is a new commandment I'm giving you, a new commandment.

It's a commandment he couldn't have given back in Deuteronomy because he had not come to earth. and shown us how he loves us.

He says, a new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, that is the brethren. Right? Brothers and sisters in Christ, love them as you love yourselves.

No. Love your brothers and sisters as I have loved you. And how did he love us? Greater love has no man than this, he said of himself, that he lays down his life for his friends.

In other words, the standard Jesus is setting you in this church is that you are here to die for one another. Not just to serve, not just to be on the, what was it, the works team?

[20:24] They're doing all the work here at the moment. not just to do that, to die for one another. That's not going to happen, is it?

Is it possible that you might find giving up something that's precious to you is like dying? No? Oh, well then it's easy, then you get rid of that.

Let's concentrate on the serious stuff. You see what he's saying? You are here, Jesus said you are here to lay down your life for the brothers and sisters in this church, your church.

That's a pretty high standard. It's a standard that can only be met in Christ, because he says if you are my disciples, you will do this.

And the verse we're reminded of from chapter 13, by this will all men know that you are my disciples. Do you see how that contrast with what we've been looking at? Paul is talking about the Corinthians who are going to the judges of the world and saying, oh, I'm a Christian, and this guy's a Christian, and we can't get on together.

[21:34] Instead, he's saying, you will live together in the church in such harmony that there's going to be road accidents on the corner, because everybody's saying, hey, that's that outfit.

Everybody looks after each other, everybody loves each other.

I don't really want road accidents to be on that corner, but you get what I'm getting at, don't you?

He's saying, you should so love one another that people stop and say, wow, this is what Christianity is about.

And then in verses 9 through 10, he has a simple message, stop sinning. It's not bad advice, is it? The trouble with sinning is we like it. Now, there may be some real oddballs here. Christians are odd.

And there may be some real oddballs here who actually sin with stuff they don't like. Wow. If that's you, come and tell me about it later, because I haven't met anybody who does sin that they don't like.

[22 : 42] We do it because we like it. And so stopping sinning is going to be a challenge. It's going to be difficult. And so Paul warns us, the wicked don't inherit the kingdom of heaven.

The wicked. That's that lot that we were talking about last week, who do those horrendous immoral things. Right? Look at the list he gives us. Do not be deceived.

No, the sexually immoral. Yep, got them nailed. Idolaters. We're not really, I mean, we haven't got the idols. Have we? Or adulterers, no, or men who have sex with other men.

No, no, not us. Nor thieves, oh, nor greedy, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor swindlers, will enter, inherit the kingdom of God.

Sin is serious. it's a barrier to your entry to heaven. And yet, and yet, what we were was this.

[23 : 50] In Christ we're different. And so when he warns us that the wicked won't inherit the kingdom of heaven, he also tells us that there is a way through it.

The passage from Ephesians that was alluded to earlier in the service, a great passage to read on this. Because he says we are renewed in Christ. The same message coming up in Colossians 3 verse 5.

Put sin to death. Slay it. Now, that might mean some practical steps, guys. If porn is your problem, you might have to get rid of your computer.

You could manage that. But your phone, you may even have to get rid of that. if that's what it takes. Do you want to take your phone to heaven?

It's not going to work, is it? No, you don't anyway. I mean, it just is, what is the priority in your life? Is holiness, is the love of God more important to you than going to that movie or engaging in that sport?

[25 : 04] people. Now, there's nothing wrong with movies per se. Some of them there is, but nothing wrong with movies per se. There's nothing wrong with sport, unless you're as crippled as I am and then it's really dangerous to everybody.

But seriously, there are things that are good and yet they can become a problem to you. Put it to death. Finish it off.

Now, we just mentioned adulterous here, but listen, if you're living in an adulterous relationship, how do you put it to death? Right here, right today, you go home to someone else.

You find a friend, or you ask the church to find you a motel, or you say, it's going to stop now, right here, right today, and you deal with it.

Press the wrong button by mistake. Look, deal with it. Put it to death. Right? Is it an idolatrous pursuit of your career?

[26 : 09] Maybe you even have to stop your career. Now, I wouldn't advise you to do that in a hurry, but seriously, if it's an idol, deal with it. Put it to death.

But that isn't enough. You see, Paul is not talking here about a law that you can tick off. When I had the road accident you heard about earlier, after a couple of months, the police rang up and said, oh, they've been talking to this guy, and here was the course of action they thought was appropriate.

There are consequences, aren't there? I've lost my train of thought there. I don't know how I got on to that. Yes, I do. it's not a law that you can tick off, right?

So, as a result of him running the red light and talking on his phone, he was liable to prosecution and fines and so on. Tick the boxes, dealt with. But living for Christ isn't like that, is it?

We can't do it. That guy probably now stops for red lights. I hope so. he didn't have any insurance, so he's going to be paying for a long while for the car he rode off.

[27 : 27] My guess is he hasn't stopped using the phone, because you don't learn that lesson, do you? But seriously, the Christian life isn't like that. Instead, we are called to immerse ourselves in Christ and to find life in him.

Do you see that? And that's why, right at the end of this section, he's saying live as Christ's. You belong to Christ. Immerse yourself in him.

He says, first of all, that we're branded with his name. Do you see that? That's what some of you were, but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Kids, do you sometimes wear a uniform? Those of you who go to school probably do, home schoolers, excuse me. You get away with it.

But clubs, sports teams, you put on a uniform, you identify with that team. And Christ has identified himself with you.

[28 : 33] That's double-edged, do you see that? Because everything you do, Christ has said, that person is mine, they're living for me. Wow. But more importantly, he's saying, you can live for me.

You can be in my team because I have given you my spirit. Do you see that? We are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the spirit of God.

You take these words of Paul today and treat them as law and you will fail miserably. You know what Paul says here in Corinthians about the law?

He says it provokes to sin. Now that's a puzzle. Children, maybe down the road from you there is a section of land on which is growing a lemon tree.

And right at the moment the lemons are green. And who on earth would want green lemons? And I will guarantee you that you will want one of those green lemons the moment mum and dad say, oh, keep away from the neighbours, don't pinch their lemons.

[29 : 54] Because the law provokes sin. And the moment Paul said, I used to covet, of course he did, we all covet. Paul didn't know I was coveting until he read in the law, thou shalt not covet.

And what was his response? he coveted more. Do you see that? And if you use this today as law, you are lost. You really are.

But if you use it as something that throws you onto Christ, if you say, yes, Jesus can help me, then you'll begin to be transformed into his image.

Do you see that? And that's why I took us right at the beginning of this little message to that verse, verse 11. We are branded in his name. Do you know what that means?

It means our identity is in Christ. In our Maori tradition, we have this thing where we identify with a river and a mountain and a marae heritage.

[31 : 04] I could take you through all of that. It probably wouldn't tell you much about me. It would leave you totally puzzled. Takahanga marae, you know where that is?

No, that's my marae, yeah, hey. No, that's not going to work, is it? But if I say, my river is the river of life, if I say, my mountain is Mount Zion and the new creation, if I say, my phokapapa is I'm a son of God by adoption through Christ, then I'm talking about my real identity.

You know, when you meet somebody, I've done it this afternoon, I've met some new people and we say, what's your name? Because I'm suffering from concussion, it has nothing to do with the forgetfulness of old age, I blame it all on concussion, I will have forgotten your name almost straight away.

And then I say, and what do you do? Or where do you study? Right? And that's our identity in this world. No. It's going to happen soon that when we meet somebody we're going to say, yeah, what's your name?

And how do you identify? And, you know, we shrug at that and say, horrors. No. That's the open invitation we have as Christians. How do you identify?

[32 : 36] I'm a Christian. Right? When you meet somebody new and they say, what's your name? You give your name. And they say, what do you do? You say, I live for Christ. Right?

Look, it makes, there's only one answer that they can give to that. How does that work? And you're in. Right? You want to witness the gospel.

It's fantastic. Your identity is in Christ. You are branded with his name. And he has identified himself with you.

And with you as a church. So let your life be filled with the spirit trusting in Christ and living for him. Let's pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Our Father in heaven, we thank you that Christ stepped into this world not just to save us, not just to identify with humanity, but to call to himself an unlovely people he loved, to make us his image, his name carriers, his brand in this market.

[33 : 51] Lord, help us not just as individuals, but as a church, but as a church, to live in the power of your spirit as those who are washed, sanctified and justified.

Help us to be a people who live for Christ and we ask it in his name. Amen. Amen. Amen. be ready?

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Jahrese and have been for the other years. Amen.