

Grace, mercy and peace are yours in abundance though faith in ur Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

⁹ Don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom? Do not be deceived: No sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, or anyone practicing homosexuality, ¹⁰ no thieves, greedy people, drunkards, verbally abusive people, or swindlers will inherit God's kingdom. ¹¹ And some of you used to be like this. 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. **This is God's Word.**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

At times I have been told that the Bible is an old and outdated book. How can something that was written thousands of years ago apply to us today. People will tell me that things have changed so much and then there is all the knowledge and technology we have today. How can the Bible possibly apply to us in this day and age? But as I consider these verses from our sermon text, it sure appears that they might have been written for modern day America. The list of sins Paul gives is pretty relevant to today. So, as we consider the words of Paul, **“May we keep the Kingdom of God in Focus.” “Let Us watch out for the things that would bar us from the Kingdom,”** and **“May we be reminded and encouraged by How God keeps us in his Kingdom.”**

I. Paul begins this section with a rhetorical question, **“⁹ Don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom?”** Of course I know that. Unbelievers are not part of God's kingdom and will not be in heaven – heaven is only for believers.

But then Paul warns us about being deceived so that we fall away from God and he gives a long list of sins that describe the unrighteous – sins that are so prevalent in our society today. As I read that list you were probably thinking, “It's a good thing that's not me.” I had those same thoughts, especially when it came to practicing homosexuals and adulterers. Paul groups these sins into different areas. There are the sexual sins that are all around us and tempt us every day. Even Christians fall into the trap of thinking that living together without the benefit of marriage is the normal thing to do but that is some of the sexual immorality Paul is talking about. And if we think we don't have a problem with sexual sins, do a quick check on yourself – what are you watching on TV and what kind of movies are you going to? What kind of video games are you playing or letting your kids play? Satan is pretty sneaky in the way he throws temptation into our lives.

Then there are the sins of idolatry that can go hand in hand with thievery and greed and swindlers. We as Christians sometimes let money or hobbies or sports or even our children and their activities come between us and God. It doesn't start out that way but it is so easy to let the “nice” things of this world that we consider marks of success to draw us away from God's Word and our Christian family.

The final category Paul hits is drunkards and those who use abusive language. You could throw drug abuse in there as well. Sometimes people take things that are okay, even beneficial

and turn them into something that is destructive and causes pain. Drunkenness and verbal abuse are demons that can so easily entangle us before we even know it.

I would hope and pray that these sins are not part of your lifestyle or character but if we are honest with ourselves we have to admit that we might occasionally dip our toe into a sin in one of these areas or another? That's why we need to listen to Paul's warning, "Watch out, don't be deceived," – living in this way will keep you out of God's Kingdom because these sins can easily overtake your way of life.

We see these things around us all the time and so this warning is relevant to our lives as well. We might be more enlightened and have more technology than the people of Corinth but sin hasn't changed much throughout the years and sometimes technology makes it easier to commit some of these sins.

That is why Paul encourages us to keep God's Kingdom in focus because at the center of God's Kingdom we find Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ has changed our lives by paying for our sins and bringing us forgiveness. When we fall short we need that forgiveness that our Savior so graciously brings us. Christ gives us his righteousness to make us right with God through faith. Because of our faith in Christ, we are part of his kingdom right now. We rely on God to give us the strength to recognize these temptations and to push back on them. That is why Paul continues by encouraging us to remember how God brought us into his Kingdom and how God keeps us in his kingdom.

II. Verses 9 and 10 were a reminder of where the people of this congregation once stood – outside God's kingdom but verses 11 are the sweet words of the gospel. **"¹¹ And some of you used to be like this. 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."** Paul says some but in reality we all were like this – sinful and not living up to God's standard of perfection.

But we, too, have been washed – some think this refers to baptism but I think it is more a reference to how Christ washes us clean with his Holy, precious blood which was shed for our sins on the cross. Not only have we been washed but we have been sanctified. Sanctified is one of those church words that means to be made holy. That doesn't mean we are perfect but as God looks at us, he sees us as perfect because Christ has covered us with his righteousness. Therefore we are justified which means declared "not guilty" of our sins. This announcement comes because the penalty has already been paid – once again taking us back to Christ and the cross.

Paul reminds us this is all because of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. There is no other name under heaven by which we might be saved. Only faith in Jesus can bring us forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. There is no other way.

The only way we can receive this is through the working of the Holy Spirit because we were dead in our sins but the Holy Spirit brought us to spiritual life and keeps us spiritually strong through a regular diet of God's Word.

Today, we celebrate that God has graciously brought us into his kingdom and washed us clean of the guilt of our sins. As members of his kingdom he has promised us everlasting life in heaven. Why would I want to throw that all away?

That's why Paul's warning is so strong – watch out for the ways of the world. Don't let them deceive you! If sin is creeping into your life, pay attention and start making some changes now before you get completely sucked into a sinful lifestyle.

Remember that only Christ can help you resist temptation and only Christ can guide you along the path of the righteous.

So come for a regular diet of God's Word to refresh you, to wash you clean and to renew you as you get ready to face the world for another week. Gather with your church family as we look to God's Word to keep us on the right path and to remind us of God's love and grace for each one of us. May the Holy Spirit continue to work in our hearts through the Word to keep us members of the Lord's kingdom. Amen.