

## “Courting Sin” (1 Corinthians 6:1-11)

What is “the great American pastime?” If you answered baseball, you would be correct. For decades, baseball has been called by this name. However, litigation is moving into second place. Our criminal justice system in this country is big business beyond belief. It’s also turning into a great entertainment value for the dollar. The legal frenzy that we seem to be wrapped up in is driven by some of our favorite national slogans: “I’ve got my rights.” “I don’t have to take that from you.” “I’ve got it coming to me.” Our national motto seems to have changed from “In God we trust” to “See you in court!”

Tragically, the words “I’ll sue” are two of the most over-used words in our American vocabulary today, because everybody is suing everybody else. Children are suing parents, students are suing teachers, players are suing coaches, homosexual lovers are suing states, and spouses are suing their marriage partners. This isn’t limited to non-Christians. Christian neighbors are suing each other. Christian faculty members are now filing suit against the administrations of Christian schools. Churches are suing one another. Churches are suing their pastors, and vice versa. Brothers and sisters in the family of God are actually pressing charges, demanding their rights, sometimes to the exclusion of any attempt to reconcile face-to-face. We are a culture gone mad.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, what we see today is nothing new. Two thousand years ago in ancient Greece, the church in Corinth was “sue happy” as well.<sup>2</sup> Yet, the apostle Paul is going to state clearly that Christians, of all people, ought to be able to settle their own disputes. The key in doing so is to understand our true identity in Christ. When we understand who we are in Christ, we will not have to war with other believers over material possessions or legal rights. Paul’s point is that *we should live out who we are*. In 1 Cor 6:1-11, Paul provides two exhortations to help us *live out who we are*.

**1. Commit to settle disputes in the church (6:1-8).** In this section, Paul poses eight questions in eight verses. By peppering the Corinthians with questions, he is hoping to help them clearly see that they are in contempt of God’s court. Paul is going to argue that believers should keep their civil conflicts out of the courts. When (not if) there is a conflict, it should be settled within the confines of the local church. Paul kicks off chapter 6 with his first of eight questions: **“Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor [i.e., fellow Christian], dare to go to law before the unrighteous [i.e., wicked unbelievers]<sup>3</sup> and not before the saints?”** Paul starts this sentence in the Greek with the verb “to dare” (*tolmao*) to place stress on this word. (This is reflected in the KJV and NKJV.) This is a question with an edge. It is as though Paul is saying, “How *dare* you take your legal grievances against each other before unrighteous people!<sup>4</sup> How could you do this? What are you thinking?”

Why is Paul so ticked? First of all, the Corinthians are giving God and His church a “black eye.” In Paul’s day, legal hearings constituted a large part of the entertainment business in an ancient Greek city. The ancient Greek courthouse was not a private room with a small gallery such as we have today. The courtroom was in the public square or the marketplace. In Athens (and Corinth was undoubtedly similar), a legal dispute was brought before a court known as The Forty. The Forty picked a public arbitrator, who had to be a citizen in his 60<sup>th</sup> year, to hear the case. If it still wasn’t settled it went to a jury court, which consisted of 201 citizens (if the case involved less than a certain amount of money, perhaps \$1000 today), and 401 (if more than \$1000). Some juries were as large as 6000 citizens over 30 years of age. It is plain to see that in a Greek city every man was more or less a lawyer and spent a lot of time deciding or listening to cases.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, when someone hauled a brother or sister into court there, they weren’t just settling a dispute; they were holding the church itself up to public scrutiny and ridicule. Paul is concerned about the selfish arrogance of God’s people. The Christians in Corinth are publicly airing their “dirty laundry” throughout the city. These lawsuit-happy Christians don’t seem to care what other people think. This flies in the face of Paul’s simple exhortation that *we should live out who we are*.

Second, Paul is upset because the Corinthians have failed to recognize who they are. The decision by these Christians to go to court also reveals how little respect they have for the church's authority and ability to settle its own disputes. Yet, back in chapter 1 Paul identified these people as "saints" or holy ones of God (1:2). He said they were enriched in Christ Jesus and were not lacking in any gift (1:5-7). In chapter 2 he said they had the mind of Jesus Christ; they could think the way Christ thought (2:14-16). So they have in their body of believers all the resources necessary to settle disputes. The Corinthians boasted of their great spiritual gifts. Why, then, did they not use them in solving their problems?

In 6:2-3, Paul continues his righteous rant with three more questions, all of which are designed to demonstrate how foolish it is for the Corinthians to throw their legal disputes before judges of the world. He makes his case by using future end-time realities to motivate the Corinthians in present prime-time living. Paul writes, "**Or do you not know that the saints [i.e., believers] will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute<sup>6</sup> the smallest law courts? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life?**" In both the Old and New Testaments, we are told that believers will one day rule and reign with Christ.<sup>7</sup> One element of our responsibilities will be judging the world and angels.<sup>8</sup> This judgment will be delegated to us by Christ.<sup>9</sup> We will then serve as His representatives in this judgment. It is still His judgment, but we are representatives who have been given authority.

A wise senior pastor knows that his secretary is "the boss." Frequently, I will state to our staff and people in our church that Judy is "the boss." Of course, most people recognize that I have been given the responsibility of overseeing the staff and office. Yet, as the senior leader, I can delegate authority to whomever I want. Judy has served with me in our office for 6.5 years. She has earned my confidence and respect. Therefore, I frequently bestow authority upon Judy because she is faithful.

As God's representatives, we have been given His authority to judge in the present and in the future. Therefore, since we are going to sit in God's Supreme Court, then surely we ought to be competent enough to decide the mundane kinds of disputes that occur among the members of our church. *We should live out who we are.*

In 6:4-8, Paul tells the Corinthians what they should do when they have strife in their church. Beginning in 6:4 he writes, "**So if you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church?**" This verse can be interpreted as either a question or a command.<sup>10</sup> Most English versions that translate 6:4 as a question presume that Paul is speaking of unbelieving judges. However, it is better to see this verse as a command like the NIV and KJV do. This verse would then read, "Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church!" (NIV) This fits the use of the words and the context better. Paul has just finished motivating the Corinthians to take care of their own conflicts. Now he commands them to action.

In 6:5-6, Paul uses an ironic taunt to berate the Corinthians.<sup>11</sup> He even warns them up front that it is coming. He writes, "**I say this to your shame.<sup>12</sup> Is it so, that there is not among you one wise<sup>13</sup> man who will be able to decide between his brethren,<sup>14</sup> but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers?**" Throughout this book, the Corinthians have been guilty of boasting. Here, once again, Paul humbles them and cuts them down to size. He sarcastically asks, "Are you so wise that there is no one in the church to judge legal matters? Do you actually need to go outside the church? I thought you were wise guys. Come on! Don't you have at least one person who can judge legal matters?" Paul's point is glaringly clear: Any Christian walking with the Lord is a better option than taking a case before an unbeliever in a secular court of law. After all, we have the mind of Christ, we have (or should have) the motivation of love, the absence of revenge, and the desire to see even the guilty restored. Christians have the advantage of adhering to the "Law book," which focuses on biblical truth and justice.

Like an ice cube on a sensitive tooth, Paul continues to chill the Corinthians' pride. He wraps up this first section in 6:7-8 by showing the Corinthians the right way to respond: **“Therefore, it is already a total defeat for you that you have lawsuits against one another.<sup>15</sup> Why not rather put up with injustice? Why not rather be cheated?<sup>16</sup> Instead, you act unjustly and cheat—and this to brothers!”** Paul insists that going to court with a fellow-believer is a no-win situation—a “total defeat.”<sup>17</sup> An even more shocking condition was that some of the Christians in Corinth were more than the victims of wrong and fraud. They were the perpetrators of these things (cf. Matt 5:39-41). As you know, suing often leads to cheating someone else. Say you sue someone. If he defends himself successfully, usually it still costs him thousands of dollars in court costs and lawyer fees. If he loses, it costs him not only the legal fees but also the judgment. And that doesn't even touch the matter of his reputation. How much more is that the case when two Christians go up against one another in a secular court?

Paul says the better way is to take the loss. Paul is telling us that it is better to be a victim than a victor.<sup>18</sup> Well, I don't know about you, but I can think of a number of good reasons for not letting someone cheat me. First, it's not fair. Second, I worked hard for what he cheated me out of. Third, if I let him cheat me this time without resisting, he'll just do it again when he realizes I'm a patsy. Fourth, if I let him cheat me, I'm letting him cheat my kids. And on and on we can go giving good reasons why Jesus and Paul just aren't very practical on this point.

But without trying to discuss all the ramifications of this Law of Non-resistance, I think we must at least see that if these passages teach nothing else, they teach that as a Christian my rights are not as important as my testimony. If I look after *my testimony*, the Bible hints that there is Someone who will look after *my rights*. After all, God is either in control or He is not. He is either the owner of the cattle on a thousand hills or He is not (Ps 50:10). If He's not, then we're all wasting our time here today. And if He is, then I don't need to break my neck trying to protect my rights and my property and my reputation. God can and will take care of all that for me.<sup>19</sup>

This is a powerful message that needs to be sounded loudly and clearly to a society in which we incessantly hear about “getting our rights” but rarely about being willing to suffer earthly loss in order to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven (cf. Matt 6:20). After all, we cannot take anything earthly with us when we depart from this life (cf. 1Tim 6:7-10), so why should we be so concerned about earthly rights and possessions here?<sup>20</sup> We should be willing to give to one another rather than trying to get from one another. There should be no going to court with one another. If we insist on going to court it should be a court of believers in the church, not unbelievers outside the church.

This past week I was talking with a friend about his world travels. He told me that on a recent trip to Brazil, he loaned \$1,000 to his guide/translator, under an agreement to be repaid. Unfortunately, his guide cheated him out of his money. Obviously, my friend was angry and disappointed. He was eager to get his money back. He shared this predicament with his non-Christian roommate, a native Brazilian, who calmly said, “Let it go...just forgive the man.” He then shared how he had lost \$40,000 because his business partner wasn't paying taxes. What's especially interesting is: The average Brazilian makes \$240 month, compared to our \$1,375/month (Washington State). My friend lost \$1k and his roommate lost \$40k. My friend lost his surplus vacation money; his roommate lost an enormous amount of money that took him two years to pay off.

In summary, what is so wrong with going outside the church for judgment? First, it indicates a deep disrespect for the leaders. It says, “The secular experts can do it better.” It looks to worldly competence rather than the judgment of Spirit-filled leaders. Second, it indicates a lack of belief in God. It is God who rules His church. It is God who put the leaders in place and who guides them.<sup>21</sup> We must respect both God and our leaders enough to entrust our grievances to them.

Now I would like to wrap up this section by anticipating some questions and trying to answer them.<sup>22</sup>

**1. Is it ever legitimate for a believer to use the secular court system?** Yes. Paul had a high regard for the Roman justice system. Acts 18 tells us that in the city of Corinth during Paul's time there, the Jews had dragged him before the proconsul; a man named Gallio had accused him of treason, of preaching a religion that would undermine Rome. Gallio listened to it and said, "No, this is a minor religious dispute. This has no place in a court of law." So Paul himself benefited from the fairness of Roman justice.

Furthermore, In 1 Cor 6 Paul is dealing only with civil disputes between individuals, not criminal actions or disputes with insurance companies, or class-action suits, or other kinds of legal action. The only thing that is categorically ruled out is for a believer to sue another believer. In Rom 13:4, Paul makes it clear that secular civil law courts are valid and needed. In a fallen world, people can be vicious and violent in their selfishness. Therefore, God provides a way to enforce relative social justice and check such destructive selfishness—by force if necessary (i.e., "the sword"—severe penalties for non-compliance).

One important clarification: Paul does not specify any criminal cases because he teaches elsewhere that these must be handled by the state (Rom 13:3-4). We must always distinguish between sins and crimes. Sins are handled by the church while crimes are handled by the state. Both are God's governing authorities. Furthermore, when a crime has been committed, a Christian may at times be obligated to turn a fellow-Christian in and even to testify against him in court. The church does not have jurisdiction over criminal justice—that belongs to the state, according to Romans 13.

One time when it is permissible to sue, in my opinion, is when one is seeking protection from the state. Churches have filed class-action suits for protection of religious freedom. Right-to-life organizations have sued for the protection of the unborn. Civil rights organizations have sued for the protection of the rights of minorities. A Christian university sued for protection from what it saw as a vendetta by the IRS. Such legal steps must be weighed carefully, and must be undertaken only with due consideration of the ultimate impact on the church's effectiveness, but at least I don't think 1 Cor 6 rules them out.

**2. What about "friendly lawsuits" to gain insurance proceeds?** Suppose a Christian family has a swimming pool and, God forbid, at a youth group party a teen drowns. The family who owns the pool has a \$1 million insurance policy, but the insurance company won't pay unless they are sued. It is possible to file a "friendly suit," in which the grieving family agrees to file against the insurance company, but not seek damages from the family that owned the pool. Technically, that family is the defendant, but, in fact, the insurance company is the defendant. I do not think this is forbidden in our passage.

**3. Are Christians forbidden to prosecute other Christians?** Paul's statements in 1 Cor 6 bear on an extremely limited context. The moment we press this passage beyond this context, we run into serious difficulties. For one thing, he is dealing with financial disputes, not with issues like violent crimes. Should we say that Christians may never prosecute other Christians for child-abuse, or domestic violence? That we should not contest child-custody if the other Christian parent is guilty of sexual abuse? In my opinion, we should not even use this passage as a prohibition against ever suing another Christian over financial matters. There are always unique cases in our day and age: Flagrant, chronic default of child-support by a Christian parent. A swindler who takes a Christian small businessman for thousands (unable to pay employees) and then says, "You can't sue me because I am a Christian." A Christian who engages in dishonest business practices and refuses to comply with the decision of other Christians to make restitution needs to be judged by the church and possibly by those outside the church. These types of cases seem to fall into a 1 Tim 5:8 domain, where a believer is capable of behaving worse than an unbeliever. Consequently, judgment must fall! This actually serves to uphold Christ's reputation and the testimony of the church.

[In our first section, Paul exhorted us to commit to settle disputes in the church. In this concluding section, Paul reminds us that the unbelieving judges in these courts will have no part in the kingdom of God.]

**2. Live out your new identity (6:9-11).**<sup>23</sup> In the following three verses, Paul lists ten vices that characterize unbelieving sinners in order to exhort believers to live like saints.<sup>24</sup> Paul writes for the third time, “Do you not know...” (cf. 6:2, 3)...**“Do you not know that the unjust [i.e., the unbelieving judges] will not inherit God’s kingdom? Do not be deceived: no sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes,<sup>25</sup> homosexuals,<sup>26</sup> thieves, greedy people,<sup>27</sup> drunkards, revilers, or swindlers<sup>28</sup> will inherit God’s kingdom”** (6:9-10). Paul reminds the Corinthians that these judges they are seeking out will not spend eternity with them. They are not brothers and sisters in Christ. Consequently, they do not have Christians’ best interests at heart.

Instead of warning the Corinthians, Paul exhorts his readers to not go to these unjust judges or to behave like them.<sup>29</sup> An exhortation is often more motivating than a warning. This past week, Justin, our middle child was misbehaving at the dinner table. I got up out of my seat and walked over behind him. I was just about ready to clamp down on his shoulder with my “death grip” when Lori signaled to me to rub his head. I proceeded to do so and spoke words of affirmation to him. His behavior immediately improved. Sometimes what we need is not a kick in the seat but a rub on the head.

In 6:11, Paul informs the Corinthians that they too “were” previously like the wicked in Corinth. He writes, **“Some of you were like this; but<sup>30</sup> you were washed,<sup>31</sup> you were sanctified,<sup>32</sup> you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”** In spite of their serious behavioral problems, Paul insists that the identity of these Christians has changed, and he insists that they have been completely forgiven (“washed”), set apart as God’s children (“sanctified”), and declared righteous in God’s eyes (“justified”). Far from threatening their standing with God because of their sins, he affirms the security of their standing with God, in spite of their sins! How can this be? Because our standing with God is never based on our work for Him, but always and only on Christ’s work for us—and our willingness to receive it. This means you don’t have to change your moral life before you can come to Christ; you have to come to Christ the way you are before your moral life can be changed. The issue is not how bad you’ve been or how good you’ll promise to be from now on; the issue is: Are you willing to believe in Christ and let Him begin to change your life from the inside out?

One of the crimes that is beginning to take off in our high-tech, information-driven society is known as identity theft. This happens when someone gets hold of another person’s credit information and other personal data and uses these to make expensive purchases and carry out other transactions in the victim’s name. This crime is well named because as far as the credit and banking systems are concerned, the person using the information is the same person whose name is on the card or account. For all practical purposes, there has been an exchange of identity.

What identity thieves accomplish illegitimately, Jesus Christ has accomplished legitimately for believers. That is, He has affected an exchange of identity with you. Christ did not simply come to change your life. He came to exchange your life for His.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, *we should live out who we are.*

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**Scripture Reference**

1 Corinthians 6:1-11  
Matthew 18:15-20  
Hebrews 2:5-9  
Revelation 2:26-27; 20:4  
Matthew 5:41-48  
Romans 12:17-21  
Philippians 2:1-8

**Study Questions**

1. Why should a believer refuse to take another believer to court (6:1-8)? When have I been tempted to take legal action against someone? What were my motives? What did I learn from this experience?
2. How do I feel about judging the world and angels (6:2-3)? What does this tell me about the high view that God holds believers in? Does this give me a greater sense of confidence when I think of judging more trivial matters here on earth? Why or why not?
3. When (not if) I enter into a conflict with another believer, who would I like to mediate (6:4-6)? How many wise people do I know at Emmanuel? How can I work toward increasing my level of biblical wisdom and discernment? Would people choose to seek me out to help judge matters of conflict? Why or why not?
4. Why do I always seem to want my own way (6:7-8)? How can I learn to give in to the selfish desires of others? Am I willing to be cheated or taken advantage of? If not, why not? In light of eternity, do some of my desires really matter? How will I learn to trust in a sovereign God who promises to meet my needs? Read Matthew 6:19-34.
5. Which of the ten sins listed in 6:9-10 are a temptation for me? How have I sought to overcome these sins? How can I ensure that I refuse to tolerate these sins? G. K. Chesterton, "Men do not differ much about what things they will call evils; they differ enormously about what evils they will call excusable." Am I guilty of justifying or excusing various sins in my life? Who can I confess my sin to? Read Proverbs 28:13-14.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> This idea came from Doug Goins, “Inappropriate Legal Actions”: <http://www.pbc.org/library/files/html/4519.html>.

<sup>2</sup> The Jewish people did not ordinarily use the public law courts at all. They had their own system of justice which was established during the wilderness wanderings 14 centuries before Christ, when Moses was advised by his father-in-law Jethro to set up a system by which disputes could be heard and from which appeals could be made to Moses himself. Over the succeeding centuries this system was enlarged into a complex organization of priests, Levites and heads of families who had responsibilities over various kinds of disputed matters. The Sanhedrin later served as a kind of Supreme Court. The Jews actually believed that taking their disputes to public courts amounted to blasphemy against God’s law.

<sup>3</sup> Collins and Garland argue that these judges were not merely unbelievers, but were wicked and unjust in their rulings. See Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians: Sacra Pagina* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 231 and David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 195-196.

<sup>4</sup> See Verlyn D. Verbrugge, “1 Corinthians” in the *Revised Expositors Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, awaiting publication), 120. Cf. Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000),

<sup>5</sup> William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 49-50.

<sup>6</sup> The marginal reading in the NASB “try the trivial cases” probably gives the better sense than “constitute.”

<sup>7</sup> Paul does not elaborate what he means by this eschatological judgment, though this concept is reflected elsewhere in the NT (cf. Matt 19:28; 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6; Rev 2:26; 20:4) and in various texts of intertestamental and first-century Judaism (e.g., the LXX of Dan 7:22; Wis 3:7-8; *1 En* 1:9; 67-69). Verbrugge, “1 Corinthians,” 121.

<sup>8</sup> By using *angelous* (“angles”) without the article, Paul is not necessarily including all the angels. He must mean that Christians, when ruling in the future with Christ, will have a part in judging the devil and the fallen angels at the second coming (cf. Rev 19:19, 20; 20:10). Harold W. Mare, *1 Corinthians*. The Expositor’s Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976 [2001]): Electronic Ed. See also Isa 24:21-22; 2 Pet 2:4; and Jude 6).

<sup>9</sup> This judgment will take place just after Jesus returns to earth at His second coming to set up His kingdom.

<sup>10</sup> See Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 204-207 for an excellent discussion of these options.

<sup>11</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 237 and Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 208.

<sup>12</sup> Contra what Paul wrote in 1 Cor 4:14. What was to the Corinthians’ shame? It was that by going into secular courts to settle their church problems they seemed to be saying that there was no one in their church wise enough to settle these matters. Certainly they could count on the Holy Spirit to give them the wisdom they needed to do this (cf. John 14:26; 16:13). We should not wash our dirty linen in public. F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians: New Century Bible* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1971), 59.

<sup>13</sup> The word “wise” (*sophos*) is a loaded term in the book of 1 Corinthians. It has a negative connotation in every usage (1:19, 20, 25, 26, 27; 3:18, 19, 20) except 3:10. See Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 208.

<sup>14</sup> Paul is using irony in the light of the claim by many at Corinth to be “wise.”

<sup>15</sup> “It is possible that this use of *meth heauton* [“with your own selves”] for *met allelon* [“with one another”] is deliberate, in order to show that in bringing a suit against a fellow-Christian they were bringing a suit against themselves, so close was the relationship.” Robertson and Plummer 116.

<sup>16</sup> Paul’s two questions in 6:7b each imply a “Yes” answer (prefaced by *ouchi*). Compare Matthew 5:39-40. “Is Paul’s expectation fair or reasonable? It is no more “fair” and “reasonable” than the divine grace which has eclipsed justice in Christ’s giving up of his person and his ‘rights’ on the cross, indicating in turn God’s surrender of his ‘right’ to pronounce a negative verdict on humankind without transcending justice in costly, generous mercy.” Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*,

<sup>17</sup> Only here and Rom 11:12. “To go to law with a brother is already to incur defeat, whatever the result of the legal process.” Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*,

<sup>18</sup> Deffinbaugh, “Courting Sin” (1 Cor 6:1-11): [http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=789](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=789).

<sup>19</sup> Michael P. Andrus, “Suits That Don’t Fit” (1 Cor. 6:1-8): unpublished sermon (1/14/01).

<sup>20</sup> Verbrugge, “1 Corinthians,” 123.

<sup>21</sup> Richard L. Ganz, *20 Controversies that Almost Killed a Church: Paul’s Counsel to the Corinthians and the Church Today* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003), 74.

<sup>22</sup> These first two questions have been adapted and revised from Andrus, “Suits That Don’t Fit.”

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<sup>23</sup> I am indebted to my friend, René Lopez, for his work on 1 Cor 6:9-10. See “Does the Vice List in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Describe Believers or Unbelievers?” [http://www.scriptureunlocked.com/pdfs/ViceList1Cor6-9\\_10.pdf](http://www.scriptureunlocked.com/pdfs/ViceList1Cor6-9_10.pdf). Lopez explains the strengths and weakness of five possible views and then provides five persuasive lines of argument to establish what he calls the “Live like Saints” view: (1) The context addresses Christians, (2) the relationship between *adikeo* (“you do wrong,” 6:8) and *adikos* (“unrighteous,” 6:1), (3) the meaning of “inherit the kingdom of God,” (4) contrasting elements, and (5) exhortation instead of warning.

<sup>24</sup> See also Collins, *First Corinthians*, 229; Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 438; and Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 211. This is in keeping with Paul’s typical way of arguing from a believer’s position to exhort them to live godly (cf. Rom 3:21-4:25 to 6:1-8:39; 12:1-15:13; Gal 2:1-4:7 to 4:8-6:15; Eph 1:1-3:21 to 4:1-6:20; Col 1:3-2:23 to 3:1-4:5). See Lopez, “Does the Vice List...”

<sup>25</sup> “Male prostitutes” (*malakoi*) refers to the passive role in a homosexual union whereas “homosexuals” refers to the active role.

<sup>26</sup> David E. Malick shows that Paul was condemning all homosexual relationships, not just “abuses” in homosexual behavior, in “The Condemnation of Homosexuality in 1 Corinthians 6:9,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 150:600 (October-December 1993): 479-92.

<sup>27</sup> Note the seriousness of the sin of covetousness or greed (cf. 5:10-11; 6:8). Greed may manifest itself in a desire for what one should not have (Exod. 20:17; Rom. 7:7) or in an excessive desire for what one may legitimately have (Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5). Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Constable’s Notes on 1 Corinthians* 2005 Edition:

<sup>28</sup> The sins enumerated in 6:9-10 share the common traits of being self-indulgent and self-serving. Craig L. Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*: NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 121.

<sup>29</sup> He did not mean that Christians are incapable of practicing these sins, but they typically characterize unbelievers. The Corinthian Christians were committing most of the sins mentioned in 1 Cor 6:9-10. Some of them are involved in coveting and swindling (6:8); some in adultery and fornication (5:1; 6:15); some in idolatry (10:14); some in drunkenness (11:21); some in reviling (4:5?). The fact is that this group of Christians was breaking almost this whole list!

<sup>30</sup> Paul uses the strongest contrastive conjunction in Greek *alla* (“but”) three times to express a strong contrast emphasizing the past and present position that should lead the Corinthians to change their moral behavior. See Lopez, “Does the Vice List...” and Robertson and Plummer, *1 Corinthians*, 119.

<sup>31</sup> The verb “washed” (*apolouom*) occurs in only one other place in the NT (Ac 22:16), where it refers to Paul’s salvation and his subsequent baptism. Presumably Paul considers the lists of sins he has just cited as filth that needs to be washed away. Verbrugge, “1 Corinthians,” 126.

<sup>32</sup> See Heb 10:10 and 1 Pet 1:2.

<sup>33</sup> Tony Evans, *Free at Last* (Chicago: Moody, 2001), 101-102.