

1 CORINTHIANS 6:11B

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Turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 6. In verses 1–8 Paul was focused on the sin of Christians taking each other to civil court. But then in verses 9–10 he gave us a list of 10 different sins. The first half of the list is in verse 9, and it's focused primarily on sexual sin. Paul started by talking about sexually immoral people in general, and then he mentioned idolaters because both of these sins took place at the pagan temples in Corinth. The next type of sin was adultery, which is a special kind of sexual immorality that only married people can commit. Then Paul finished verse 9 by referring to “males who have sex with males.” And the footnote in the Christian Standard Bible shows us that he was talking about “both passive and active participants in homosexual acts.” He was confronting both sides of the coin with regard to male homosexuality.

Then in verse 10 we have the second half of the list, which is focused mainly on stealing. We can see that theme right away at the beginning of the verse, where Paul mentioned thieves. Then he moved from the behavior of stealing to the attitude behind that behavior: greed. The desire for money is what leads people to steal. And when people steal, they often use the stolen money to get drunk. That's the next type of sin that Paul addressed here. Then he mentioned verbally abusive people because drunkenness can easily lead to sinful speech. Finally, Paul ended his list by referring to swindlers. A swindler is basically a special kind of thief that normally uses dishonesty to defraud and cheat people. And that's apparently what the Corinthian believers were doing to each other when they went to civil court together.

So we need to watch out for all 10 of the sins that Paul listed here in verses 9–10. And he gave us a strong warning at the end of verse 10 to motivate us. He said that none of these types of sinners “will inherit God's kingdom.” He was warning us that if we practice any of these sins and don't repent, then we will be excluded from God's kingdom. Instead of reigning with Jesus when he comes back to set up his earthly kingdom, we will end up being punished in hell for all eternity. That's why Paul warned us in verse 9 not to be deceived. If we've made a profession of faith in Jesus, then it's easy for us in our pride to assume that we're saved and on our way to heaven. But if we're living in unrepentant sin, then our profession of faith may not be genuine. So we need to examine ourselves to see if we're in the faith. We need to make sure that we're living in regular and habitual obedience to God.

Then last week we began looking at verse 11. Look at what Paul wrote in this verse: “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.” So Paul started this verse by pointing back to his list of 10 different sins in verses 9–10. And he said that some of the Corinthian believers were previously character-

ized by those sins. But then something changed, and Paul used three verbs to describe what happened to them. The first one is that they were washed. Now Paul probably wasn't talking about baptism here. Instead he was referring to the inward reality that the outward picture of baptism is pointing to. He was talking about the time of our conversion when we repented of our sins and put our faith in Jesus. At that moment our sins were washed away and completely forgiven.

Then with the second verb Paul said that we were sanctified. This word basically means "to set apart for a special purpose." And normally it has the nuance of holiness. So when God saved us and took away our sins, we were sanctified and made holy through the death of Jesus. Now we tend to think of sanctification as something that happens throughout our Christian lives. We call it progressive sanctification because we slowly become more holy over a long period of time. But there's another kind of sanctification taught in Scripture, and it's called positional sanctification. It's not pointing to our behavior but our position before God. It doesn't describe what happens during our present lives as Christians but what happened in the past when we were saved. It doesn't refer to a long period of time but to a single moment when God declared us to be perfectly holy in his sight. That's what Paul was talking about here in verse 11.

Finally, Paul said with the third verb that we were justified. This word usually means "to declare someone righteous." It refers to a legal declaration from God that our sins are forgiven and that Christ's righteousness belongs to us. Now Roman Catholics have believed for centuries that we're justified by grace and works. But 500 years ago the Reformers argued from Scripture that we're not justified by works but by grace through faith. This truth is especially clear in Paul's letter to the Romans. In chapter 3 and verse 24 he said that we "are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Then in verse 28 he wrote, "We conclude that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law."

So salvation is a free gift from God that we receive by trusting in Jesus alone. And when we received that gift, God declared us to be righteous. Instead of seeing us as sinners, he sees the perfect righteousness of Jesus. In Philippians 3:9 Paul said that we don't have a righteousness of our own, "but one that is through faith in Christ—the righteousness from God based on faith." So Jesus took our sin on himself when he died on the cross, but he also gave us his perfect righteousness. That's a pretty good trade for us, isn't it? That would be like getting a huge diamond in exchange for a peanut. And that illustration doesn't even do the situation justice, because you can at least eat a peanut! Plus the biggest diamond in the world doesn't compare to the amazing gift of God's righteousness.

So Paul was reminding the Corinthian believers in 1 Corinthians 6:11 that they used to be habitual sinners. Some of them were even characterized by the sins listed in verses 9–10. But God washed away their sins, made them holy in his sight, and declared them to be righteous. And Paul emphasized this contrast by using the Greek word for but three times here, not just once. He used it before each verb, as we can see in more literal translations like the Legacy Standard Bible and the New American Standard Bible. So Paul was stressing just how amazing and wonderful the gift of salvation is. But I think he was also trying to get the Corinthian believers to bring their practice into conformity with their position. They were struggling with sin to various degrees, and we face the same struggle today. But as we think about what God has done for us, we should be motivated to live in obedience to him.

Now let's cover some new material and look at the rest of verse 11. At the beginning of this verse Paul described what God did for us at salvation. But then he ended this verse by describing who God is. He said that we were washed, sanctified, and justified "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." So there are two prepositional phrases here that are joined together by the word "and." The first phrase starts with the word "in," and the second one starts with the word "by." But in the original Greek text Paul used the same preposition at the beginning of each phrase. And so they should probably be interpreted in the same way. Most likely they're both referring to the agents who performed the three actions mentioned earlier in the verse. First Paul gave us the primary agent of our salvation, and then he covered the secondary agent.

So let's start with the primary agent. Paul said that we were saved by "the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." The Greek word for name is used over 200 times in the New Testament, but Paul wrote only 22 of them. Six of them are in this letter, and we've already seen the first five of them. Paul used this word four times back in chapter 1. In verse 2 he talked about how believers call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Then in verse 10 he urged his readers in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to be united and get rid of their divisions. Then in verses 13 and 15 he talked about how improper it would have been for people to be baptized in his name instead of the name of Jesus. Then in chapter 5 and verse 4 he said that when we gather together as Christians, we are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus.

Now in modern times we tend to think of a name as just a way to refer to someone. But during Bible times names were much more significant. A person's name was connected to his character and reputation; it represented who he was. And so the meaning of biblical names is very important, and that's certainly true about the name Paul referred to here in chapter 6 and verse 11. The name "Jesus" is used almost 1,000 times in the New Testament, and we learn more about this name in the very first chapter of the New Testament. In Matthew 1 an angel told Joseph through a dream that he was to take Mary as his wife, even though she was pregnant. And in verse 21 the angel said that when she gave birth to her son, Joseph was "to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

So this name has a special connection to the theme of salvation. The English word "Jesus" is actually the Latin form of the Greek name *Iesous*. And this name is the Greek form of the Hebrew name *Yehoshua*, which we pronounce "Joshua." This Hebrew name simply means "Yahweh saves." Yahweh is God's name; it's used over 6,000 times in the Old Testament. In most Bibles it's translated with the word LORD in all caps. But a better way to represent this name is with the word "Yahweh," because that's probably how the name was pronounced. So the name "Jesus" refers to the fact that God saves. When Jesus came to earth about 2,000 years ago, he died on the cross to save us from our sins. He took our place and suffered the punishment that we deserved. In 1 Timothy 1:15 Paul said that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." That's the heart of the gospel right there!

But Jesus didn't just come to be our Savior. He came to be our Lord as well. And that's why Paul often put the word "Lord" right before the word "Jesus." I counted 72 times where Paul used the phrase "Lord Jesus" in his letters, and 12 of them are here in 1 Corinthians. We've already seen this phrase five times in chapter 1 and twice in chapter 5. Now we're seeing it here in chapter 6 and verse 11. Now many people

think that the word “Lord” is a name, but it’s actually just a title. The Greek word here is pronounced *kurios*, and it’s used over 700 times in the New Testament. It can also be translated with the word “master.” It normally stresses the idea of authority, and so it shows here that Jesus is in charge and that we must submit to him.

Now some people think that we can be saved without submitting to Jesus as our Lord. But the New Testament teaches otherwise. Acts 16:31 tells us that we must believe in the Lord Jesus to be saved. In other words, we can’t receive him as our Savior without also recognizing him as our Lord. We see the same truth taught in Romans 10. Look at what Paul wrote in verses 9–13: “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, Everyone who believes on him will not be put to shame, since there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, because the same Lord of all richly blesses all who call on him. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

So Paul made it very clear in verse 9 that if we’re going to be saved, we must confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord. In other words, we need to acknowledge him as our master and submit our lives to his authority. And if we trust in the Lord Jesus alone for salvation, then we will not be put to shame on judgment day. Instead we will experience all the spiritual blessings that he has promised. Then in verse 13 Paul reiterated his point by stating that “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” But in this verse Paul was actually giving us a quote from the Old Testament. More specifically, he was quoting the beginning of Joel 2:32. And in that verse the word LORD is in all caps to show us that Joel was using God’s name, Yahweh.

Now unfortunately when the Old Testament was translated into Greek a few hundred years before Jesus came to earth, God’s name was not represented with a transliteration or a letter-for-letter equivalent like other names. That’s because the Jews stopped speaking God’s name sometime after the Hebrew Old Testament was completed and sometime before it was translated into Greek. And so God’s name was translated with the Greek word *kurios* instead. So whenever the writers of the New Testament gave us a quote from the Old Testament, they normally used this standard Greek translation, which is called the Septuagint. And they didn’t alter the Septuagint’s approach to handling God’s name. That’s why Paul used the Greek word *kurios* in Romans 10:13 when he quoted Joel 2:32. But the original Hebrew text has Yahweh, God’s name.

So when the New Testament refers to Jesus as Lord, sometimes it goes beyond a simple recognition of his authority. When Paul said in Romans 10:13 that we need to call on the name of the Lord to be saved, he was basically proclaiming in a subtle way that Jesus is Yahweh. Hebrews 1:3 says that “the Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact expression of his nature.” And Paul wrote in Colossians 2:9 that “the entire fullness of God’s nature dwells bodily in Christ.” So Jesus isn’t just one of many earthly masters; he’s far above all other masters. Paul said in Romans 10:12 that he’s “Lord of all.” He’s the God of the entire universe, and he is worthy of our worship and our full submission. We need to make sure that we’re living in continual obedience to him.

But Paul didn't just refer to Jesus as Lord in 1 Corinthians 6:11. He used the phrase "Lord Jesus Christ." Now there are a few translations that don't have the word "Christ" here, namely the King James Version and the New King James Version. But these translations are not based on the oldest and most reliable copies of the New Testament. There are two copies of 1 Corinthians that were made in the fourth century, and we even have a copy of 1 Corinthians that goes all the way back to the third century. All three of these manuscripts have the Greek word for Christ, and that's why it's found in all the other major Bible translations, including the Christian Standard Bible, the English Standard Version, the Legacy Standard Bible, the New American Standard Bible, the NET Bible, the New International Version, the New Living Translation, and a variety of others.

Now we tend to think of the word "Christ" as the last name of Jesus, but in reality it's just another title like the word "Lord." The word "Christ" a transliteration or a letter-for-letter equivalent of the Greek word *christos*, which is used over 500 times in the New Testament. It's parallel to the word "Messiah," which is a transliteration of the Hebrew word *mashiach*. Both of these words have the same meaning: "anointed one." Now in the Old Testament there were three types of people who were anointed. The first group of people and the one that most Christians are familiar with are kings. For example, in the book of 1 Samuel we can see that Saul and David were both anointed by the prophet Samuel to be kings of Israel.

But kings weren't the only group of people who were anointed in the Old Testament. We can see that priests were also anointed. For example, Leviticus 8:12 states that Moses anointed his brother Aaron as the first high priest of Israel. And God said in Leviticus 6:22 that when Aaron died, one of his sons would "be anointed to take his place." But there's one final group of people who were anointed, and they were prophets. For example, in 1 Kings 19:16 God told Elijah to anoint Elisha as prophet in his place. But Deuteronomy 18:15 teaches that one day God would raise up a special prophet. And Jeremiah 23:5 shows that a special descendant of David would rule as king and deliver his people. Psalm 110:4 shows that this future king would be "a priest forever according to the pattern of Melchizedek."

And so there would be a special Messiah or anointed one who would fulfill all three of these roles. That's what we should be thinking about when we see Jesus called "Christ" in the New Testament. He's the supreme prophet because he always speaks God's words. In John 12:50 he said, "I speak just as the Father has told me." But Jesus is also the supreme priest because he offered himself as the perfect sacrifice once for all. Hebrews 10:10 says that "we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all time." And one day he will return and reign as the supreme king on the earth. Revelation 19:16 calls him the "King of kings and Lord of lords." He's worthy to save us because he's our Messiah and the ultimate prophet, priest, and king.

So in 1 Corinthians 6:11 the primary agent of our salvation is "the Lord Jesus Christ." But Paul also mentioned a secondary agent: "the Spirit of our God." The Greek word for Spirit is used almost 400 times in the New Testament. And the underlying meaning of this word is the idea of being immaterial. You see, as human beings we don't just have a body; we also have a spirit. We have both a physical aspect and a non-physical aspect to our beings. James 2:26 says that "just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead." This verse shows us that our spirit is actually the core of our existence. Our body

will die someday if Jesus doesn't come back first, but our spirit will survive and go to be in the Lord's presence until our body is resurrected.

So the Greek word for spirit can refer our human spirit, but it can also refer to beings who do not have physical dimension as part of their essential nature. Hebrews 1:14 says that angels are ministering spirits. But fallen angels are of course spirits as well. Luke 8:2 says that some women had been healed of evil spirits. It mentions that Mary Magdalene had seven demons come out of her. But normally the Greek word for spirit refers to God's Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 2:11 Paul wrote, "For who knows a person's thoughts except his spirit within him? In the same way, no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God." In that verse the first occurrence of the word "spirit" refers to a person's spirit, and so it's not capitalized. But the second occurrence of the word "Spirit" refers to God's Spirit, and so it's capitalized, just like we have in chapter 6 and verse 11. Paul was talking about God's Spirit here as well.

Now some people think that God's Spirit is just a reference to an impersonal force. But Scripture tells us that the Spirit does things only a person could do. Romans 8:26 says that "the Spirit himself intercedes for us with unspoken groanings." And Ephesians 4:30 warns us not to "grieve God's Holy Spirit." So God's Spirit is a person, but he's not an ordinary person. In 1 Corinthians 3:16 Paul asked, "Don't you yourselves know that you are God's temple and that the Spirit of God lives in you?" The temple was designed to be the dwelling place for God's visible presence. But after Jesus died and rose again, God began to live in his people. That's why Paul said that the Corinthian believers were God's temple. But instead of saying that God lived in them, Paul said that the Spirit of God lived in them. He was strongly implying that the Spirit is God.

So it's correct to say that the Spirit is God, but it's also accurate to say that the Spirit is of God. That's what Paul was saying in 1 Corinthians 3:16 and again here in chapter 6 and verse 11. The Greek word for God is pronounced *theos*, and it's used over 1,300 times in the New Testament. It's not a name but a common noun that just refers to a deity. It normally refers to the true God, but it can also refer to false gods. In Acts 7:40 Stephen reminded the Jewish religious leaders about what their ancestors had done on Mount Sinai 1,400 years earlier. He said that "they told Aaron: Make us gods who will go before us." The word "gods" is not capitalized there because it's a clear reference to false gods.

But usually the Greek word for God is singular and refers to the true God. That's why the word "God" is normally capitalized in our Bibles like it is here in 1 Corinthians 6:11. But what did Paul mean when he said that the Spirit is of God? How can that be true if the Spirit is God? The answer is found in the doctrine of the Trinity. The root of the word "Trinity" is the word "unity," but it has the prefix "tri-" at the beginning, which just means "three." Scripture teaches clearly that there is one God but that God is three persons: Father, Son, and Spirit. We see them mentioned side by side as equals in a variety of passages. But the most prominent place is Matthew 28:19, where Jesus told his followers to "make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

So when Paul said that the Spirit is of God, he was probably talking about God the Father. And most likely his point was that God the Spirit was sent by God the Father. We know that the Father and the

Spirit are both God, and so they're equal in their essence. But they have different functions within the Godhead. The Father leads, and the Spirit submits to the Father, just like the Son does. This is why Jesus said in John 14:26 that the Father would send the Holy Spirit in his name. And in John 15:26 Jesus said that the Spirit of truth proceeds from the Father. The point here is that the Holy Spirit's role in our salvation was planned and directed by God the Father. The Father didn't just send his Son to be the Savior of the world, as we see in 1 John 4:14. The Father also sent his Spirit to participate in our salvation as well. Both of them were involved in washing us, sanctifying us, and justifying us.

So in 1 Corinthians 6:11 Paul said that the primary agent of our salvation is "the Lord Jesus Christ." And then he mentioned the secondary agent of our salvation: "the Spirit of our God." But we shouldn't forget that God the Father was involved too! He was the movie director behind the scenes making sure that the Son and the Spirit were in the right places doing the right things at the right times. And notice that Paul referred to the Father as our God. This phrase points us back to chapter 1 and verse 3, where Paul greeted the Corinthian believers with grace and peace from God our Father. And Paul was just borrowing this concept from Jesus, who taught his disciples in Matthew 6:9 to pray to "our Father in heaven."

So the Father is not just the sovereign God of the universe. He's also a personal God who loves his children. He made us part of his family when he saved us through the work of the Son and the Spirit. We belong to him, and now we can cast our cares on him at any time, because we know that he cares for us. That's what we're taught in 1 Peter 5:7. So when we think about the amazing gift of salvation that we've received, let's make sure that we don't focus so much on the gift that we forget about the giver of that gift. The reason salvation is such a wonderful gift is that it's from the triune God. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit all played a part in our salvation. Let's close in prayer and thank God for saving us.