

Forgive Because You're Forgiven

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

1826

Take your Bible if you will and look at the 6th Chapter of 1 Corinthians; the 6th Chapter of 1 Corinthians. We're today going to conclude a study that we began last week on the subject of forbidden lawsuits. Perhaps if we were to have a better title for our section that we'll look at today, we could call it the principle of forgiveness; the principle of forgiveness. But it does just deal with the last part of the message which we began last time. As so often is the case with me, I get about three quarters of the way through a message and I've got about 15 minutes of material left. And that isn't enough to fill up a next Sunday. So I find something in that and just kind of explode it and run all over the place. So that's what I'm going to do this morning.

And what I was struck with were two things. As I was reviewing verses 1-8 this week and going through some of the things that I saw there, the whole idea hit me of this principle of forgiveness. And as I then looked at verses 9-11, which is the part we didn't get to and the part originally for today, I again was struck with the whole idea of the transformation of salvation. So those two things are going to kind of come together in our study this morning, the principle of forgiveness and the whole aspect of transformation that takes place in salvation. This week Monday through Friday I was ministering in Dayton, Ohio and we were having a great time in teaching the word of God. We were speaking to a group at a certain church there, a Christian tabernacle and some other groups as well. One of the days I had a meeting with the ministers of Dayton, and I was able to share with them some of the principles of ministry and the word of God that I feel are important.

And as usual, we had a question and answer time and one of them asked me, as I have been asked many times, what I see as the primary requirement or the primary objective or the primary issue in my ministry. What is the one thing above all other things that I desire to do in relation to the ministry itself? Not particularly between myself and God, but as I see the ministry. And that was really a rather easy question and this is what I said. I said the primary objective of all pastors, of all Bible teachers must be to bring the congregation to a place of submission to the word of God.

Now maybe you never thought about anything simplified to that level, but that is the goal of the ministry as I see it. To bring this people to a place where they will submit themselves to the principles of the word of God in obedience. I teach you the word of God not just to teach it, but so that you'll respond to it. We talk about the authority of the word of God in order that you might come under that authority. The objective of the ministry then, as I see it, is to bring a people to a place of submission to the word of God. Then you can solve every problem by simply introducing a biblical principle that deals with it and the people will conform to the principle.

So often I talk to ministers and they don't do that. They don't teach the word of God and they don't build into their people a submission to the word of God and then when a problem comes and they offer a biblical solution the people can't relate to that. They assume it's just another opinion because

they don't have the mind of submissiveness to the word of God. And my prayer would be that at Grace Church whenever we would state a biblical principle that is the answer to a problem, everybody would say oh fine, if that's what the word of God says, then that's the way it is.

And I think that's exactly what we are experiencing. But in many cases that isn't true. That's just a general look at the idea of the ministry is to bring you to a place of submitting to biblical principle. Why? Simply because to be submissive to Scripture is to be in the place of blessing, right? Now there are many principles in the Scripture that we need to submit to. One of them is this principle of forgiveness that we're going to look at this morning. This is a great principle given in the New Testament. That Christians are called on to forgive one another. Perhaps it's as clearly stated as anywhere in Ephesians 4:31-32 and I would just have you look at that for a minute, and we're going to talk about this principle before we look at the chapter itself in 1 Corinthians 6.

But in Ephesians 4 it says in verse 31, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and evil speaking," that's talking behind someone's back, "be put away from you with all evil." Kasia means general evil. "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another." Now that's a very clear statement. Kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another and here comes the standard, "even as God for Christ's sake," or because of what Christ did, "has forgiven you." Now people, right in that verse you have the statement of the principle of forgiveness. We are go forgive one another whatever they do in the same way that God because of Jesus Christ has forgiven us.

That's the standard. That is a tremendous principle. And the breadth and the depth and the height of that principle can only be measured by understanding how much God has forgiven us. That in turn is to be the standard by which we forgive one another. Now in one sentence, right there in Ephesians 4:32, Paul summarizes the law of personal relationships. What is the law of personal relationships? Well, you've heard the golden rule, "do unto others before they do unto you?" No, "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." That's nice. I don't mind the golden rule a bit. The biblical standard is higher than that. The biblical standard says "do unto others as Christ has done unto you." You see? "Do unto others as Christ has done unto you." You forgive others in the same way with the same magnanimous and total forgiveness that Christ exercised in your behalf. Or that God exercised in your behalf. You forgive in the same way that God forgave you.

Now that is a tremendous truth, tremendous. In John Chapter 13, the general idea that we are to be responsive to the pattern and the model of Christ is given. In John 13:13, Jesus said to His disciples, "You call me master and Lord, and you say well for I am. If I then, your Lord and master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." Now listen, "For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you." Now here is a tremendous spiritual principle. What kind of behavior does a Christian have toward another Christian? You treat each other as Christ treats you. That is the principle of interpersonal relationships among Christians.

We are to treat each other in the way that Christ has treated us. Now I want you to look at Colossians 3 and I want to go a step further with this principle, because I see it so many places in Scripture. Colossians 3:12, now Paul here is telling the Christians "Put on therefore," Colossians 3:12, "as the elect of God, holy and beloved, tender mercies," that means a heart of compassion, "kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering," now listen, "forbearing one another," that is being patient, "and forgiving one another if any man has a quarrel against any." You do what if they have a quarrel? You forgive. And here's the standard again, "even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

Now the standard then of forgiveness is the magnanimous, unlimited, and total forgiveness that Christ exercised toward us. That God exercised toward us in Christ. The Christian is to put on new virtues says Paul. One of them is the virtue of forgiveness and we are to forgive in the same measure, the same quality, the same sense as Christ forgave us. Now this is a tremendous principle people. When you ask yourself how much are you to forgive somebody, Jesus said you remember Peter said, "Lord if my brother sins against me, how many times should I forgive him, seven times?" And Jesus said, "Not until seven times, but until seventy times seven times."

The attitude of a Christian toward another Christian is to be forgiveness. It doesn't matter what he did. It doesn't matter how it hurt. It doesn't matter what it was. We are to forgive. That is the obligation. Another Scripture that I thought I'd point out is in Luke 17:3-4, because it speaks to the same thing. It says this, "Take heed to yourselves." Which in the vernacular would be watch it. Watch it. "If thy brother trespass against thee," and it happens. People do offend us and trespass against us, "rebuke him. And he repents," do what, "forgive him." If he repents, forgive him. "And if he trespassed against thee seven times in a day and seven times in a day he turned again to thee saying I repent, thou shalt forgive him."

And you know, people would say well forgive him, but what if he keeps doing it and keeps doing it? Do I keep forgiving him? Keep...yeah, even if he does it seven times a day and repents seven times a day. You keep forgiving him seven times a day. You see the principle people is very simple. The Christian has toward his brother the obligation of forgiveness. Listen, this is important. There is nothing, there is nothing that anybody has ever done to you in any situation that is unforgivable. Did you get that? There is absolutely nothing that falls into the category of beyond forgiveness. I don't care what anybody has done to you, I don't care how they have offended you, I don't care how they have wounded you or how they have grieved you or how they have injured you, it doesn't matter what it is, nothing falls outside the context of Scripture. There is no such thing as something for which you cannot forgive somebody else.

You say wait a minute. Why do you say that? The reason I say that is because there is nothing that you have ever done in your life that is outside the forgiveness of God and that's the standard, right? You are to forgive one another even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you. When you come to Christ and believe in Him and receive Jesus Christ, is there any sin at that point that is unforgivable? Absolutely not. It doesn't matter what it was. Whether it was a moral issue, whether you were the vialist, rottenness, lowest reprobate on the earth, whether it was a religious issue and you were the world's worst false teacher, it doesn't matter what it is. If you come and kneel at the cross to receive Christ, there is nothing that is unforgivable.

If you were a soldier who pounded a nail into the hand of Jesus Christ. If you were a soldier who rammmed the spear into His side. If you were a mocker who spit in His face, that is all forgivable. All of it is forgivable. "And as Christ has forgiven you," 1 John 2:12, "all your trespasses, that's the standards by which you forgive one another." There is nothing that is unforgivable. Nothing. Now that's a high standard isn't it? You say, but you don't know what he did to me. I don't care. There is nothing...you don't know what you did to God either and He forgave that and that's the standard.

Now sadly, the Corinthians were openly disobeying this principle. Look at 1 Corinthians Chapter 6. This is a simple principle frankly people. It just really isn't that tough. But the Corinthians were absolutely ignoring it. Instead of forgiving each other, every time somebody did something wrong

they'd sue them. And they were dragging them into court all the time over every petty little thing. They were gouging either other. They had a gross lack of love, bitterness, vengeance, recompense, self seeking, unforgiving spirit, robbery. They were extorting and swindling each other. All of this going on within the church. Just gouging each other, instead of forgiving. Every little thing became a case for the courts.

And so Paul writes 1 Corinthians Chapter 6 to the beleaguered Corinthian church that has managed to manifest about every sin conceivable and in 6, he deals with the sin of suing each other instead of forgiving each other. The New Testament principle is very clear people. We are to forgive one another. And it couldn't be more clear than that. Now as Paul writes Chapter 6, you'll remember that he tells them that they give evidence of either a misunderstanding or a total disregard of three great truths. The rank of the church, the right attitude of the Christian, and the relation to the world.

He says, "You people by suing each other," number one this is review, look at verses 1-6, "you give evidence that you are disregarding the rank of the church." You're ignoring the high place of the church. And what he's pointing out here is let the church judge. Let the church evaluate. Let the church make the decision if you have a problem. Matthew 18 says if your brothers are having problems and you can't get together and one doesn't repent and make it right and you don't get what you need to get, take it to the church and let the church settle it and if the guy doesn't buy the settlement, then discipline him and put him out of the church. But the church can deal with the issue.

Verse 1, "How dare any of you having a lawsuit against another go to law before the unjust and not before the saints." How dare you go to pagan courts instead of the church. "Don't you know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge in smallest law courts? Don't you know that we shall judge angels, how much more things that pertain to this life?" He says, look at the rank of the church. You're exalted above the world. You're exalted above angels. You will judge the world. You will judge angels. If you're going to do that, don't you think you can handle your petty grievances?

Why take them into the law courts? Why take them before the pagans? Well, of course, the reason was because they didn't want justice, they wanted to get into the law courts and extort. They wanted to defraud and get more than they deserved. In verse 4, he says, "If then you have lawsuits or law courts of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church." And we saw last week that probably what he's saying here is you'd be better off to pick the lowest member of your church to determine what should be done rather than take it to a pagan judge. What does he know? And besides that, you don't want to drag the Christians' fights into the world so the world knows we don't get along.

It's a tragic thing. In verse 5, he says, "I speak to your shame. Isn't there anybody among you who can judge? Don't you have a wise man? Somebody who's able to judge between the brothers?" Apparently not, he says. "Brother goes to law with brother and that before the unbelievers." You take these things into court, Christians against Christians. "I speak to your shame," he says. How ridiculous when we realize that Christians are going to judge the world. Christians are going to judge the angels. Christians in the church are ranked beyond everything that God has made. Our high elevated position puts us in a position where we can make determinations regarding our own assembly and our own fellowship and we'd certainly don't need to go into pagan courts. That's Paul's point.

Now his second point which we saw last week, continuing our review, is that you also have misunderstood not only the rank of the church, disregarded not only the rank of the church, but the right attitude of the Christian. And of course, we've just seen that the right attitude of the Christian isn't to gouge and get back something, it's to forgive. Verse 7, "Now therefore there is utterly a fault," and the word can be translated, defect or defeat. There is literally a defeat among you. You're already defeated because you go to law one with another. You lose before you get there, even if you win the case, you lose spiritually in disobedience to God. And the testimony of Christ is warped and wounded.

"Why don't you rather take wrong? Why not rather allow yourself to be defrauded? Oh no, not you. You do wrong and defraud in that your own brethren." He says the Christian thing to do would be just accept it. Allow it to happen, and of course, the implication is forgiveness. A Christian attitude is to forgive. Our Lord Jesus said, according to Paul, Paul said our Lord said in Acts 20:34-35, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," and that's the principle. We are to forgive. The Christian attitude, you've wronged me, I forgive you as God for Christ's sake forgave me and nothing falls outside the circle of such forgiveness.

You know, that's pretty clear between Christians. But let me take it a step further, even including unbelievers. Matthew 5:43, this gets pretty interesting. Matthew 5:43, now our Lord is speaking here and He says, "You have heard that it hath been said," now we don't know where it hath been said in particular, it may have an illusion to the rabbinic teaching, "thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy." It was customary among the Jews that the rabbis would teach to love the Jews and hate the Gentiles, so they had heard this. "But I say to you, love your enemies." Now that must have really come as a shocker to the Jews to love a Gentile. "Love your enemies," now watch, "bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you." Now people there you have a very, very interesting statement.

Here's an unbeliever, an enemy, somebody outside the kingdom. What happens when he does you wrong? When he curses you, what do you do to him? You bless him. When he hates you, what do you do? You do good to him. When he uses you, extorts from you, abuses you, what do you do? You pray for him. You say do you mean that if an unbeliever does me wrong, I just say bless you my friend? If an unbeliever steals my...bless you I just pray for your salvation. That's exactly what it means. My friend, I have pronounced blessing upon you. I pray that you would be blessed. I'll do anything good that I can do for you and I'll certainly pray for you. You say for heaven's sake, this is incredible.

I've talked to Christians who said, you know, I've got a guy who really did me in and boy I'm going to get it back. Thank God he's not a Christian. Or you get one of those borderline cases where the guys says I really don't think he's saved, so I think I can take him to court. And I'm not about to find out and I don't want to get him saved before we get there. Oh some people have thought that, believe me. Well, you say well, you mean, I just forgive the guy? Yeah, if it's a personal thing, that's the principle Jesus is giving. This isn't me. I'm not giving you my advice. I'm only trying to understand what the Bible says. I'm in the same boat you're in, you know. You say, yeah, but you don't have the problems...we all have problems. And you know, I'm probably more liable to get sued than you are in many ways. But that's all right, that doesn't change the principle. The principle, I'm just trying to understand what the Bible means by what it says. I'm not trying to make up my own opinions. It simply says your enemies are to be blessed when they curse. You're to do good to them when they give evidence of hating you and you're to pray for them when they use you and even when they

persecute you.

Why? Verse 45, oh this is something. "That you may be the sons of your Father who is in heaven." Now wait a minute, I'm already a Christian. You mean, I'm going to be a Christian just because I bless my enemies? No, no, that isn't what it's saying. What it means is that in their eyes you may appear to be what you claim to be. If you go around saying I am a Christian and I am one of those whom God has forgiven all their sin, the Lord has forgiven all my sin, all my wrong. I cursed Him and He blessed me. I hated Him and He loved me and did good to me. I persecuted and abused and He forgave me. That's the God that I serve, now pay up buddy. They're going to say well, you're not exactly the son of your Father are you? You see the point. You know how that works. You know, people look at my kids and they say man those kids are your kids, look at them. They have all of your characteristics. My girls they say they look like Patricia and they're very much like Patricia and Matt's very much like me and Mark's like nobody and that's how it is, you know.

We're still trying to figure out what happened in his case, but for the most part children demonstrate the characteristic of the parent. And this is what he's saying. If you don't do that, if you don't have forgiveness toward your enemies, they're not going to understand the character of the forgiveness of God. You see? We are manifesting the character of God in the world, that's the whole point. That's the input that Christ wanted to give at this point. Now look what he says. This is what God does. "He makes the sun rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust. He does good to both His children and others.

If you love them, they love you what reward have you. Even tax collectors do that. And if you greet your brethren only what do you more than others? Do not even the heathen?" Listen, if all you do is the right things toward Christians, big deal. We ought to do it as well toward others. And then verse 48 really knocks you out, "Be perfect even as your Father who is heaven is perfect." You say boy that's a high standard. I'd say so, but nevertheless, that's the pattern to emulate. Am I to forgive a Christian brother who offends me? Yes. What about somebody in the world? What about if he gouges me out of all this money? What about if he does this or takes this that isn't his? Or this or this? What am I to do? Forgive him. You say, but how's he going to learn his lesson. You don't worry about teaching him his lesson. That's in the category of God's operation.

If you were running around trying to do God's judgment, you are in the wrong business. Now the principle is toward the Christian forgiveness, toward the world I see it as the same thing. Forgiveness in personal matters. Now I want to give you a footnote that will help you because there may be times when you will go to court. And there maybe times when I would go to court, but the issue would be this and I've looked this through carefully in the Scripture and this seems to be a clear indication, that wherever the word of God or the work of God is at stake, I have the right to claim my legal privileges.

Wherever the word of God or the work of God is at stake that's when I have the right to claim my legal privileges and make some demands. I wouldn't go to court if some guy took something of mine. I'd just forgive him, but if the government came around here and said you can't preach any more then I would because I'd say you're not talking about John MacArthur now. You're not impinging upon my rights, you're beginning to get into the category of what God wants done in the proclamation of His truth. And our constitution provides for religious freedom and the liberty to express what I believe and I believe I have the right to that privilege and that freedom. And then that case I would go to gain the right that is mine. But it wouldn't be in a personal issue. It would be when the word of God or the work of God was at stake.

Now the reason I say this is true biblically is because this is precisely what the apostle Paul did. He never exercised legal privilege to gain personal comfort. He only exercised legal privilege to gain a hearing for the word of God. When he knew he had a right, for example, in Acts, they beat him. They scourged him and he says you can't do that because I am a Roman and I stand uncondemned and that is against Roman law. You have to let me go. Well, the issue wasn't his own personal comfort. The issue was he could not be legally restricted because he had freedom within Roman law and he was going to take that freedom for the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

You can check it out in Acts 16:35-39, Acts 22:24-26, and Acts 25:10-12. In three of those cases, Paul exercises his right under the government and the law to the privilege of the work of God and the speaking the truth that he had and he had done nothing wrong and should not be denied that privilege. Now there you have a different situation. If, for example, some ordinance came along and tried to close down Grace Community Church, would we say oh it's all right, we forgive you. We'll all go home and just forget the work of God. Not on your life. We'd be down there with every sort of legal thing you could imagine trying to prove that we had the right to exist. And to exercise religious freedom, but it wasn't a personal matter. It's a matter of protecting the privileges that God has given us for the proclamation of His word.

And therein, Paul used his right. Therein Paul used the law when it came to that and I feel that that is right. But never to secure personal comfort, never as act of vengeance, but only to sustain the work of God. Now what are we saying then in general? The principal of forgiveness is to operate. It is to operate among Christians and it is to operate in connection with unbelievers as well. And you say, but I won't get my money. Well, who wants money when you can do right and get the blessing of God. That's the only issue isn't it? It's the only issue that even matters. I'd rather be as poor as a church mouse and have the blessing of God than to be the richest man in the world and not to have the blessing of God.

So if I have a problem against somebody, I go to him, rebuke him. If he repents, I just forgive him. If he's in the church and he doesn't repent, we take it to the church. If the church can make a decision about it, that's fine. If the church can't settle the issue because he won't respond to it, then we discipline him. But still I forgive him. And let God be the one to rectify if there's injustice. An unbeliever outside the church offends me, what should I do to him? I should act toward him like Christ acted toward me. Total and complete forgiveness. In fact, you may find a wonderful opportunity to write a very beautiful letter expressing that very thing to somebody who's wronged you.

And maybe you've got somebody who's long overdue and hasn't paid the rent in some property that you have. Instead of banging around and going through all kinds of hassles to try to get this thing and legal and taking it to court and doing all this thing, just a beautiful letter expressing the gospel of Jesus Christ, how that God for Christ's sake forgave you and you in turn want to give them an exemplification of the character of God by relating to them in the very same way that a forgiving God related to you. I think that might be an exciting opportunity to open somebody's mind to sensitivity to God's forgiveness. That's what he's saying.

All right, now we come to the third thing and the introduction is done and we'll look at verses 9-11. Now we had to give all that principle background because that's the heart of everything. Paul says by your suing each other you show you don't understand the rank of the church or you disregard it. You

also don't understand or disregard the right attitude of a Christian which should be to forgive. Thirdly, you give evidence that you don't understand or are indifferent to the relation to the world. And this is really a powerful section. You don't understand your relation to the world.

He says in verse 9, "Don't you know that the unrighteous don't inherit the kingdom of God? Don't be deceived, neither fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, homosexuals, thieves, covetous, drunkards, slanderers, swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God and such were some of you, but you were washed. But you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the spirit of our God." Now what's he saying? He's saying hey, don't you know you're different than the world? What are you doing playing their way? What are you doing operating on their rules? What are you doing governing your life by the way they act instead of the Christian attitude of forgiveness and accepting wrong and letting God bring about justice, instead of taking things to the church and letting them be settled, you're acting just like the ungodly and you used to be that way, but you have been washed and you have been sanctified and you have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the spirit of our God.

What are you doing acting like that? Don't you know you have a new relationship to the world? You're separated from it. And what he's saying here is your behavior is totally inconsistent with who you are. The kind of activities you're doing, the way you treat each other is more characteristic of the godless people who don't even have a part of the kingdom. You're acting like you haven't even been changed. Your behavior is ridiculous. Now what he does here is really a potent thing. Look at verse 9 and we'll start there.

"Don't you know," he says, "that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" Don't you realize that you who are sons of the kingdom are on the opposite end of everything from the unregenerate? They don't even inherit the kingdom. They're not even a part of the same dimension. They're not even in the same sphere. They don't even exist in the same world. They don't breathe the same air. They don't have the capacities that you have. There are two completely different groups. The unrighteous do not inherit the kingdom of God. They have no part with you. You have no business acting like them and you have no business taking your problems to them. How could those who are not even in the kingdom judge the subjects of the kingdom.

Ridiculous. The unrighteous won't have any part in the kingdom in the future. They don't belong in God's kingdom. Why do you go for them to give you judgments? And why are you behaving like those who aren't in the kingdom when you are? And then he gives this catalogue that's just potent. He says, "Be not deceived." That is don't think your salvation and your lifestyle are two different things. Don't be deceived. The kind of activities that the world does have no place with you. You can't get away with that. And then he gives a catalogue of human lifestyle. And I'm telling you people, nothing could be more up-to-date than this. This sounds like it was written in today's newspaper. It is really up-to-date and here he catalogues the typical world.

The unregenerate, it says very clearly people that in verse 9, these are unrighteous people. And in verse 11 it says "Such were some of you before you were saved." So we know it's talking about unsaved people. People who were unregenerate and didn't know God. And here it characterizes them. Look at...here is the definition of them. Here's the world's lifestyle. Number one, fornicators, sexually immoral. I don't think anybody even has to make a comment about that today. Immorality is absolutely incredible and some of the airports where I was stopping this week, you know, I would go into get a magazine or to get some gum or something and you know, you can hardly walk in and out

of the place without seeing this plethora of sex splattered all over the magazine rack. It's just it delves to the point where you can't believe that people are so tolerant.

Fornicators, that's characteristic of our world. Sexual immorality and it's always been that way and today it seems more blatant than ever. The idolaters, false religion. I read all the time that the false systems of religion are growing more rapidly today than they ever have in their history. There are statistics to show that the cults are growing in an all time rate. Idolatry, worshipping false gods and false religious systems. Next adulterers, unfaithful in marriage, wife swapping, unfaithfulness. All of this kind of activity goes on incessantly in our world. No different than then.

Then you have a very interesting word. The word effeminate, effeminate is only that word malakos is only used once in the New Testament and that's right here. A very unusual word and it has to do with perversion. And the best that we can understand what it means, it means this, to exchange one sexual role for another. One of the characteristics of the ungodly is to exchange sexual roles. Now it seems to be general enough to include almost anything. It could be something perhaps as simple as a transvestite, somebody who wears the clothes of the opposite sex, which is very common.

Interesting, I read an article that said in southern California area, one out of every ten women that you see aren't. Now I can't verify those statistics and I don't know how they did when they made the test, but that's what the thing said. But it can go further than that. It can go to the place of sexual changes and all kinds of sexual aberrations. It can even include any kind of exchange, any kind of exchange of the roles of the sexes. An interesting comment on this I find in Deuteronomy 22:5, that we've commented before in several of our discussions, but I would just...you don't need to look it up, but Deuteronomy 22:5 says this. "The woman shall not wear that which pertains unto a man. Neither shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God." God does not want anything that even smacks of an exchange of the roles of the sexes. This is forbidden. This is characteristic of unregenerate, unrighteous, ungodly people who are not a part of the kingdom of God.

And it was a part of the society of that day. And I think even Women's Lib and that kind of thing borders on this where you are exchanging the roles. You see if you can start to do that, you can break it down. You make everybody dress alike and then you take away the authority submission principle in the home and you wipe out the family. You destroy the whole basis of a home and you've destroyed the nation and the pattern of passing on the revelation of God is really wiped out, because it's to be passed from parents to children. And destroy the family and the chain of revelation can be broken at that point. So you know Satan wants to wipe out sex roles. They are illustrative, aren't they, of the church and Christ and so that illustration is muddled and destroyed and away Satan goes to this area.

And so here characteristic of unregenerate people, they are effeminate. That is they exchange their true identity sexually for the opposite role. Another word, it says in verse 9 at the end, "Abusers of themselves with mankind," which is a long phrase for homosexuals. You people are always today in the church, you know, I just read where a Methodist church has now decided that they're going to admit homosexuals and all of this. This goes on all the time. Just a rather incessant situation today of oh we've got to take these people in. They're wonderful people. They just have a little different slant on things and so forth and so on and we need to be very tolerant of them. It's one of those things it doesn't really matter. It's only a biological factor, blah, blah, and we have to minister to them and so forth and so on.

And of course, right here in L.A. we have a homosexual church, Metropolitan something church. Jerry Mitchell got very upset at that guy because Jerry was sick a week or so ago and he saw this guy preaching on television. And Jerry got so upset that he called him up on the telephone the next day and gave him a few choice biblical truths. Which only Jerry would do, I want you to know that. But we're not saying that this is unforgivable and we're not saying that we don't love these people. We're saying that this is a sin that God hates and that characterizes unregenerate people.

The word that is used in the Bible is frequently connected with sodomy. 1 Timothy 1:10 talks about it. Sodomy, the word sodomy comes from Sodom. The sin of Sodom which was destroyed, you know, by fire, the sin of Sodom was the sin of homosexuality. The people lusted after the angels that appeared at Lot's house. And that became the first biblical illustration of homosexual, that terrible perversion. By the time the writing of the Corinthian letter, homosexuality was so widespread that it was unbelievable. Fourteen out of the first 15 Roman Emperors were homosexuals.

Socrates was a homosexual. Plato was most likely a homosexual. He wrote his dialogue called The Symposium on Love and the basis of it is homosexual love. Nero, who was reigning around this period, took a boy named Sporus and had him castrated and lived with him as wife. And when Nero died, Sporus was then passed on to Otho was the next Emperor. So this was just pattern of living in those days. This is characteristic of their former life.

Now verse 10 says, they also are characterized as thieves, and the word here means petty theft. This is crime. Could refer to just kind of street crime and then this is characteristic of today. There's no need to even give you statistics on that. It's apparent to everybody that crime keeps getting higher and higher and higher and higher, statistically speaking. And then it says the characteristic of the world is they are greedy or covetous and I don't know that any of us are unaware of this. We see it in the paper people demanding more and more, more and more, more and more, never enough, never enough. It's incredible the amount of money that people are demanding. Greed is just taking over our society like all these other areas.

Drunkenness. Some of you may have seen on television the other night the terrible story that they gave a documentary about people beginning to be drunkards when they're eight years old. Alcoholic children and all the way through life. We just keep producing more and more of these kinds of people. And then he goes to talk about slanderers or revilers, people who abuse with the tongue. And our society is loaded with those kind of people. There's no question about that. And then extortioners, swindlers, people who rip-off artists, con-artists. People who are able to swindle. All of these things are categories in which the world is defined by the word of God. We have a world full of those people.

Now just think folks, he says in verse 11, "Such were some of you." Now imagine that. The Corinthian assembly was a whole lot of those people. People say well I like to go to church because there's such a high class of people there. You wouldn't have been real thrilled with the Corinthian church. If somebody asked you why you went to the Corinthian church, you might say well I like the company. Well, what are they there? Well, they're ex-fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, homosexuals, thieves, covetous, drunks, slanderers, and swindlers. Boy you really run around with a nice crowd. Such were some of you. You know something? I hate to tell you this, but did you know what Grace Community Church is? Grace Community Church is a church full of ex-fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, homosexuals, thieves, covetous, drunks, slanders, and swindlers.

Now I don't want you stand up and tell which you were or which combination. But that's what we are, isn't it?

Such were some of you. You know, when it comes down to salvation, people, God doesn't have a whole lot to work with does He? He really doesn't. And you see that's why salvation is a total transformation because there isn't any material worthy keeping. You see? That's why if any man be in Christ, he is a what? New creation. Galatians 6:15 says, "It is circumcision that matters or uncircumcisions matters, but a new creation." That's why Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are His masterpiece created in Christ Jesus." We have to be a new creation because there isn't anything there to work with.

This passage is not teaching that if a Christian every does any of these things he'll lose his salvation, it's simply categorizing the world and saying you used to be one of those kind. But, oh, this is powerful. Look at verse 11. "But you are washed," or you've allowed yourselves to be washed literally, "but you are sanctified, but you are justified." Three times he uses the word but, the strongest adversative and he uses it three times for emphasis on the contrast. You used to be, you used to be, but now you're washed, but now you're justified, but now you're sanctified. Transformation has taken place.

And a new life demands a new lifestyle. Corinthians how can you be acting like that? You have been washed. You have been sanctified. You have been justified. The church isn't full of perfect people. The church is full of transformed sinners. This is what Christ offers a man. What Christ is saying to a man is I'll take you whether you're an adulterer or a fornicator, a sexual maniac, a deviate, a pervert, a robber, a thief, a murderer. I don't care what you are and in Jesus Christ, I'll recreate you. I'll wash you. I'll justify you and I'll sanctify you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ or because of what he's done and by the power of the spirit of our God.

That's the...in fact, maybe that's the greatest proof of Christianity of all, isn't it? The transformation of lives. We could be here for the next week just listening to your testimonies about how Christ transformed your life. If we ever wanted to do it and we don't particularly, we could have you tell the sorted background of your life and how Christ entered your life and changed all of that. Oh you still are tempted and you still sin from time to time, but the habitual evil of your life is no longer the constant pattern. It's now being broken by acts of holiness produced by the Holy Spirit.

And that is the great, great truth of Christianity that people from all backgrounds and all stratas and all nations and all intelligences and all educations and all kinds of sin have come to Jesus Christ and been transformed. And the Corinthian church just like Grace Community Church was just full of people who were living breathing evidences of the recreating power of Christ. And that is the heart of the thing. Salvation is a total transformation. I always think of the story of Mel Trotter who was a drunk, just a bottom, a gutter rat in Chicago and he let his little baby die of malnutrition because he spent all the money on booze and then they put the baby in a casket in the mortuary for the funeral the next day. He went in there at night and stole all the clothes off her dead body and took them to a pawn shop to get money for a drink.

And you know, I read that I couldn't believe that a man could sink to that level. God got a hold of his life. He became one of the fieriest preachers that ever hit the city of Chicago. That's transformation. God can do that and God does it again and again and again and again, day after day after day around the world. God is in the business of transforming lives. And we could tell you many, many

stories and you know it as well as I many, many of those great transforming miracles. And he says, you used to be like that, but and then he gives three great statements about transformation. Each one of these is a sermon in itself. We won't do that. Washed, sanctified, and justified. You have three great biblical truths there.

Let me just tell you what they are. Titus 3:5 says the washing of regeneration. The first one is the truth of regeneration. The second one is justification and the third one is sanctification. Three very serious terms at the very heart of the saving act and all of them are related to transformation. You know what regeneration is? God washes you by regeneration. That simply means, Titus 3:5, simply means that you have been recreated. It's the same as John 3. You have been born again. That's transformation. You have a transformed life. A whole new living. You have been born all over again. If you were to give a definition, you would say regeneration is the act of God by which the principle of new and divine life is planted in a person. You're washed. That is you're regenerated. You're born again, a new life and that is a radical change, radical.

Then secondly he says you're justified. If being washed changed your life, justification changed your standing before God. You used to be guilty, you used to be condemned, you used to be damned, you used to be the object of punishment a condemned criminal, but all of a sudden, God justifies you. That means He declares you righteous. He says you are no longer guilty. You are innocent. You are no longer worthy of punishment. You are free. No longer do I condemn you. I release you to liberty and blessing. That is radical, a transformed life, a transformed standing before God. Thirdly, you're sanctified that's a transformed capacity for behavior.

Sanctified means holy. You have been made holy and given a new capacity for a holy life, instead of that old sin pattern. You were like this he says, but you have been washed, regenerated, given a new life. You have been justified. That is, you have been given a new standing. You have been sanctified, you have been given a new capacity for holiness. Total transformation. What a fantastic reality. Once we live to the world and sin, dead to God, but we have been regenerated and given new life.

Once we were guilty and damned to hell, but we have been justified and given a new position. Once we were hopelessly engulfed in sin, but we have been sanctified and given a new capacity for holiness. All that transformation. How could it happen, you say? Look at the end of verse 11, "in the name of our Lord Jesus." Now what do we say the word name means? Because of who He is. It happened because of who Christ is and what He did for us. Because of what Christ has done, because of His act on the cross, His resurrection from the dead, his bearing our sin, who He is, He's provided this washing, the sanctifying, and justifying. So it is because of Christ and then it says, "and by the Spirit of our God." Christ provided it and the Spirit of God imparts it. You see? That verse is a great verse. You are washed. You are sanctified. You are justified because of what Christ has done and by the power of the Holy Spirit who applies it to your life.

People, we're new creatures. That's what he's saying. And he says to the Corinthians, hey you used to be like the rest of the world, but you are different. You have been transformed. Would you act like that? Going to law courts, that's inconsistent with your relation to this system. That's inconsistent with your attitude, which should be forgiveness. That's inconsistent with the rank of the church, which means the church can decide those issues. Let's pray together.

While your heads are bowed for just a minute in closing as you're meditating and thinking and opening your heart to the Spirit of God, let me say this. We've talked about a transformed life this

morning and that's what Christ wants to do in the life of every individual here this morning. And I know there are some of you here and you fall into the category that Paul listed in the catalogue of sin. You're defined there either in one of those or more of those than one. And you've never been washed and you've never been justified, you've never been sanctified. And you're not an inheritor of the kingdom of God. And you desperately need to transformed life. You're living in the sin that characterizes the ungodly and you need a change and Christ this morning is offering you an absolute and total transformation, recreate you and make you a new creature, with new life, new standing before God and a new capacity for holy behavior. That's what God wants to do in your life today and He'll do it if you'll accept the sacrifice of Christ and allow the spirit of God to do His work.

If you desire this morning to be transformed, if you're sick of the life you live, if you're tired of the patterns of your life, tired of being a part of the catalogue that we've seen, then what you ought to do is just say Lord Jesus I want Jesus Christ to come into my life. I want you transform me. I want you to make me new. I want to be a new creation, old things to pass away and everything to become new. And invite Jesus Christ to be the Lord of your life. If you're a Christian this morning but you're recognizing maybe that you're living by some old patterns, then you ought to seek the Lord in that regard. You certainly don't want to be what you used to be, when you can be what God has made you.

Father, thank You for our time together, for sweet fellowship in Christ. Continue Father to impress upon hearts this tremendous principle of forgiveness that we've talked about this morning that our only attitude to have toward brothers and toward those outside is that we forgive as Christ forgave us and thereby give a testimony to the world of what our God is like and that we indeed are His children. We forgive as His forgave. And then Father we pray to that You'll transform some lives today as only you can and those of who've been transformed will live the principles of a transformed life to Your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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