

Take-Aways for Small Group Leaders to Consider

The main point of this passage is to "...assert the transformed identity of the baptized." (Hays). Or as Jim has been preaching, to "remind us of who we are". Thus, the discussion should focus more on who we, as individuals and a congregation, are called to be, given that we are baptized, sanctified, and justified (v11). These terms are important and they have specific meanings, so I include definitions below from the New City Catechism:

What is baptism? "Baptism is the washing with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; it signifies and seals our adoption into Christ, our cleansing from sin, and our commitment to belong to the Lord and to his church." Important for the verses we are studying is the concept that baptism makes us members of the church body, the church family. We are brothers and sisters with each other, and children of God.

What do justification and sanctification mean? "*Justification* means our declared righteousness before God, made possible by Christ's death and resurrection for us. *Sanctification* means our gradual, growing righteousness, made possible by the Spirit's work in us."

John Piper notes (I'm paraphrasing) that justification is the act of God by which he declares us to be just or righteous or perfect because by faith alone we have been united to Jesus Christ, who is perfect, just and righteous. Justification is a legal standing before God, owing to a spiritual union with Jesus, which is owing to faith alone. Justification does not involve our work. Sanctification is the act of God by which he, through his Spirit and his Word, is conforming you little by little - or in big steps - into the image of His Son. The power by which you daily strive to overcome the imperfections in your life is the confidence that you're already perfected (justified).

Under Analyze the Text

2. Here, Paul seems to be addressing only disputes related to property or money (v.7) rather than criminal cases, which would fall under the jurisdiction of the state (see Rom. 13:1-5). Therefore, it is doubtful that Paul's intention is that these verses should be applied to every situation, but instead specific situations related to money and property. As the ESV Bible Commentary states, "Whatever the circumstances, though, it is clear that disputes between believers, especially within the same church, should be handled with great care: in a wise and godly manner before the watching world; wherever possible under the disciplinary authority of the church; and with the counsel of spiritually mature Christians who have no stake in the matter and who can give objective, Biblical advice. (See further Matt. 18:15-20)"¹

3. Legal disputes are just one characteristic of a life lived in a fallen world. Paul ends this section with a list of "wrongdoers" (those whose behavior is indistinguishable from the unbelieving world) who will not inherit the kingdom. Richard Hays does an excellent job unpacking these packed two verses: "The list repeats the six offenses already set forth in 5:11 ... We should remember, however, that Paul's present purpose in 1 Corinthians 6 is *not* to set up new rules for sexual behavior but to chastise the Corinthians for taking each other to court. All the items in the list of verses 9-10 are merely illustrations of what the Corinthians **used to be** prior to their coming into the church. But a life-transforming change has occurred: You were washed, you were sanctified, and you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.' (v.11). In light of this transformation, they ought to stop acting like wrongdoers by taking their property disputes into courts... Unless we keep this basic aim of the argument in view, our reading of this text will become severely out of focus."²

Thus, the appropriate way to handle this tough section is to follow Paul's example and emphasize what he emphasizes: God has already acted on our behalf to transform the identity of those in Christ. Thus, as believers we must leave behind the characteristics of our 'old self' and live into our washed, sanctified, and justified identity—our new reality.

¹ Bibles, Crossway. 2008. English Standard Version Study Bible. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books. 2198

² Hays, Richard B. *First Corinthians*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2011. 96-97

REVIEW:

1. Take 5-10 minutes to discuss last week's sermon, "The Question of Lawsuits between Believers."

INTRO TO THE TEXT:

In this section of 1 Corinthians, Paul continues to address specific issues within the Corinthian church (last week was incest and church discipline, next week will be sexual immorality). While each issue is important on its own, the underlying theme emphasized by Jim's preaching and explored in more depth by Paul in these verses is "remember who you are." Or, as Richard Hays says in his commentary, Paul's concern in these verses is to "...assert the transformed identity of the baptized." And Paul exhorts us to act as a special community of saints set apart from the world – to live into the amazing life of who we truly are and can be in Christ!

READ: 1 Corinthians 6:1-11

ANALYZE THE TEXT

1. In verses 1-6 how does Paul compare and contrast the church ("the Lord's people") to those outside the church ("the ungodly")?
2. In verse 7 and especially verse 8 Paul explicitly says what is wrong with the lawsuits in the Corinthian church. What does he say the Corinthians are doing with their lawsuits?
3. What are the consequences of the wrongdoing being committed with the lawsuits (verses 9-10)?

A FEW THINGS TO CONSIDER

Richard Hays points out that when Paul wrote his letter, the courts in Corinth were unjust. The rich would use the courts to take advantage of people of lesser means. This may explain Paul's statement that the Corinthians are cheating and doing wrong to their brothers and sisters (verse 8).

Paul also argues that it is ridiculous and even shameful for the church to seek help from people outside the church given that they (the church) will eventually judge the world and even the angels. The

notion of the elect judging the world is found elsewhere in scripture but the specific issue of judging the angels is unique and likely related to Paul's teaching in 1 Cor 15:24-28 that all things will be subjected to Christ, and we who are in Christ will participate in that Judgement.

But the passage is about much more than condemning lawsuits. It is a call for us to live into our new life in Christ, especially as a community. Paul reminds us that God has acted to transform us into new beings, into a new reality. We have been baptized ("washed"), sanctified and justified!

APPLY:

1. Ray Stedman says that lawsuits are one form of lust. Viewing lawsuits as lustful actions may be why Paul included lawsuits between two sections about sexual immorality. Lawsuits often arise out of greed, covetousness, or a desire to retain material things.³ While you are likely not involved in a lawsuit at this time, these verses are calling you to examine your life and that of our congregation. In what ways are you/we being greedy or covetous?
2. What does your baptism mean to you and how does it affect your behavior and that of the church as a body?
3. What does being sanctified mean to you and how does it affect your behavior and that of the church as a body?
4. What does being justified mean to you and how does it affect your behavior and that of the church as a body?

MEMORIZE: 1 Corinthians 6:11

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.

³ Stedman, Ray C. "The Wrong Way to Right Wrongs." The Wrong Way to Right Wrongs (1 Cor 6:1-11) <https://www.raystedman.org/new-testament/1-corinthians/the-wrong-way-to-right-wrongs>.