

Week of July 15-21

PAST TENSE

Scripture Reading: Read 1 Corinthians 6

One of the most hopeful phrases in Scripture has to be found in the first half of verse 11 in today's chapter reading: *"And that is what some of you were..."* Past tense! *"Were!"* Not present tense. *"Are."* Not future tense. *"Will be."* But past tense! *"Were!"* *"And that is what some of you were..."*

This amazing declaration follows Paul's lengthy description of behaviors that will keep you out of the kingdom. Such folks who knowingly, willingly, persistently and unrepentantly practice the kinds of things mentioned by Paul in verses 9-10 will be excluded from the kingdom. The behaviors Paul lists were common practice in Corinth. In fact, Corinth was so immoral and depraved that the Romans, who themselves were a pretty corrupt lot, considered the Corinthians to be really bad and debased. So, that's saying a lot. In fact, the Corinthians were so bad that the phrase "to live like a Corinthian" meant to commit sexual immorality!

It was in this sinful place that a church was established by the apostle Paul. It was here, in a city steeped in sinful immorality, that new believers were birthed into the kingdom; where they were washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God. This is why Paul could say with confidence, *"And that is what some of you were..."* Because of God's salvation, these formerly sinful people are now no longer known or bound by the sins they used to commit or a lifestyle they used to practice. No, they have a new identity now. They are new creations in Christ now. The old life is past tense. Their new life in Christ is present tense.

And, what was true for those believers in Corinth is just as true today! *"And that is what some of you were..."* There is hope in Christ. There is hope of transformation. There is hope of freedom. There is hope of new life. There is hope of a new identity, a new position, a new standing! *"And that is what some of you were..."* The sinful practices, the sexual immorality, the ungodly lifestyles, the addictive behaviors that were so much a part of your life before Christ no longer have to define you or be part of your current life. You can be free! You can change. You can live holy. That's why this is such a hopeful phrase: *"And that is what some of you were..."*

It is time for you to lay hold of this promise of God by faith. The enemy has kept you bound long enough with your past. He has tried to convince you that those old sins and habits will forever be part of who you are and that you will never be free; that they will continue to define your past, present, and future. Jesus has come to liberate you, to take that old sinful life and turn it into past tense so that you can face the future with confidence while serving God faithfully in the present with a brand new identity in Christ. *"And that is what some of you were..."*

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Take a few moments to reread I Cor 6:9-10. Reflect on what the world proclaims about these practices versus what Paul says in verse 11. Spend some time today thanking God that your old sinful identity is past tense and that you have a new identity in Christ. Commit yourself to sharing such a hopeful verse.

Take-a-way: *It's not our past life of sin that defines us but our new life in Christ!*