

THE STORYCHANGER

1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-11

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FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

Everybody wants to change. Transformation is one of the basic longings of the human heart. We want to be something better. We want to improve, progress, grow, advance in one way or another. Most successful commercials, books, and movies appeal to this longing as the hero overcomes difficulties and challenges and becomes better, stronger, richer, or happier in the process. We love these 'transformation' stories and we want to write a similar one for ourselves. So, we focus on education, fitness, fashion, health, psychology, politics, self-help books, etc., to help us change.

That's when we run into difficulty. We feel confused because we don't know what change for the better looks like. Or, we feel powerless because we don't know how to change for the better. Or we feel defeated because we've given up trying to change for the better. Or we feel disappointed because we changed but it didn't satisfy us.

Whatever our story up to this point, our stories have not changed as we would like. We are not storychangers. We need *the* StoryChanger. That's who we meet in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, where Paul tells us, **Change your story by believing the StoryChanger's story.**"

BACKGROUND

The StoryChanger series so far:

- Our Messy and Meaningless stories
- The First Perfect Story
- The Villain of the Story
- The Failed Authors

1 Corinthians is addressed to a divided church. Among the many causes of the divisions were Christians taking other Christians to court (1 Corinthians 6:1-8). Paul was not forbidding lawsuits in all circumstances. Rather he was forbidding Christians from pursuing lawsuits against one another that were petty, vindictive, repeated, greedy, and bypassed church help in settling. The Corinthian story was becoming a story of damaging division and therefore Paul attempted to unite them by their common narrative of Christ-centered transformation. He was saying, "You're writing a terrible story by your actions, **Change your story by believing the StoryChanger's story.**" So how does Paul unite them? He gets them to read their story before Christ changed their story.



What was our pre-StoryChanger story?



1. WE WERE DIRTY AND DAMNED

We were dirty

What was their pre-StoryChanger story. **Such were some of you**, he says in verse 11. What were they? Verses 9-10 tell us: unrighteous, sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, men who practice homosexuality, thieves, greedy, drunkards, revilers, swindlers. **Such were some of you**. The descriptions are self-explanatory, so let's just flag a few features of this list.

First, *'unrighteous' is separated from the rest of the list*. Why is that? 'Unrighteous' means someone who is not in a right relationship with God's law. God's law is not happy with them and they are not happy with God's law. That is the root sin of all the others. It might not look as bad as the others, but it's actually the cause of all the others and, therefore, is worse than all the others. So, if you are in a bad relationship with God's law, if you are not fully happy with God's law or God's law is not fully happy with you, you're in the worst place. That's worse than any of these actual sins that proceed from it.

Second, *idolatry comes between two kinds of sexual sin*, the first is sexual sin before marriage and the second is sexual sin within marriage. This combination tells us that Idolatry is the cause of immorality. A friend of mine who ministers to men and women with sexual addiction, focuses his counsel on helping them see that they need to deal with their self-idolatry if they are to stop their own immorality.

Third, *the phrase 'men who practice homosexuality' needs some care*. It's extremely important that we distinguish between same-sex attraction and same-sex practice. Both are sinful, but one is far more sinful than the other. You can have someone who has these desires but hates them, confesses them, and fights against them by God's grace. That's very different to someone who has them, entertains them, cultivates them, and acts upon them. Both the attraction and the practice are part of our sinful nature (in the same way is heterosexual lust and practice), but the person who fights it is going to heaven, whereas the one who practices it is not.

Fourth, *greed and gossip are on the same list as idolatry, immorality, and homosexuality*. We don't need to minimize immorality; we need to maximize greed and gossip and the other "respectable sins." All sins defile us and dirty us.

We were damned

In verses 9 and 10, Paul tells the Corinthians twice that if you're on this sin-list, you're on the no-heaven-list. If you're unchanged and unchanging when you die, you won't be changing earth for heaven but earth for hell. "Don't be deceived about this!" he warns. Just as today, there were people telling the Corinthians the opposite. Don't be deceived, the dirty are damned, the lawless are lost.



CHANGE YOUR STORY WITH GOD'S STORY

Such am I. If you are on this sin-list, you're on the no-heaven-list? This verse previews a notice on heaven's gates. It says to all who are on this list" NO ENTRY. Many assure us that such sins are no longer sins or not serious sins. Paul calls such people 'deceivers.' You cannot live like hell and go to heaven. You cannot reject God's law and get God's acceptance. You cannot stay dirty and still be saved. You cannot reject kingdom law and still get kingdom life. You cannot live in sin and die in Christ. No repentance, no entry.

Such was I. If we're off the no-heaven list and now on the no-hell list, we should rejoice. We run our finger down the list and at various points we say, "Such was I." We were no different to those still on the list. To those of you still on it, we don't look down on you. We don't despise you. Even if we don't tick all the boxes, we've ticked at least one of them and we know only God's grace stopped every box being ticked. We got from 'such am I' to 'such was I' without any help from I.

YOU CAN'T LOVE FILTH
AND LOVE FAITH



That's still my story. How do I change it?
You need the StoryChanger.



2. WE ARE SPOTLESS AND SAVED

We're looking at the greatest change in world history. It's a bigger change than the religious revolution of the 1600's, the industrial revolution of the 1800's, the digital revolution of the late 1900's, or the identity revolution we're living through. It's a personal spiritual revolution.

"You were that, but you are now this." The contrast is intensified with three buts. **"But you were washed...sanctified...justified."** Let's look at how big these words are to see how big a change this is. Each gives a different angle on the same change.

But you were washed. This is in the passive voice and is literally, "You have had yourselves washed." It emphasizes that they did not wash themselves, but an outside party washed them. They were passive in this massive washing. It doesn't mean sin was totally eliminated but a deep washing began. It's like a *Tide* pod was inserted into their hearts and started a deep clean.

But...you were sanctified. If 'washed' describes God putting something inside them, 'sanctified' describes God putting us on another side. Just as God sanctified cups by separating them from common everyday use and dedicating them for holy uses in the Temple, so God separates his people from the dirty and damned side and dedicates us to the spotless and saved side.

But...you were justified. Being washed starts cleansing, but much dirt remains. Being sanctified sets us apart from the dirt, but we can still return to the dark side sometimes. Both washing and sanctifying are imperfect and ongoing. They are big changes, but not the biggest change. The biggest change is in this phrase.

"But you were justified." Another way of putting this is "You were re-formatted." Anyone who uses their computer to type documents knows that the default format is words aligned to the left margin. That leaves a jagged edge on the right of the page as each line comes up short to some degree or another. But it can be fixed with a click on the 'justify' button. That lines up what we've written with both the left and right margin. Just as a click justifies our text immediately, Christ justifies our souls immediately. If the right margin is God's law, every line of our life comes up short to one degree or another. But Christ can change all that quicker than a click.

When the Holy Spirit gives us faith in Christ (11), it turns our eyes from our jagged life-page to Christ's justified life-and-death page, and the moment we look away from our page to his, his page becomes ours. God views us as perfectly aligned with his law. Our story is changed by the StoryChanger because his story becomes our story.



CHANGE YOUR STORY WITH GOD'S STORY

Praise Jesus the StoryChanger. What a radical change! What a total transformation. Even if you never fell visibly into these sins and dirtied your life, you had a dirty heart that needed washing, you were on the wrong side and needing transferred, and you had an unjustified life-story that needed justified. We need inward change even if we don't need outward change. We need justified by God even if everything looks aligned to us or others. Remember one unjustified line is one unjustified life. But also remember if every line comes up short, Jesus can align them all. Look from your page to his and praise him for giving you his page instead.

Pursue change through Jesus's story. Paul's basic argument was, "Change your story because Jesus has changed your story." When it comes to these petty disputes, use the power of forgiveness to empower forgiveness. Jesus has changed your past and your future, so be changed in the present. If you want to intensify the inner change and the positional change, nothing multiplies change so much as changing your gaze from your life to Christ's. Your justification can never change, but its transforming power changes according to how much we keep it before us.

SEE MORE OF YOUR JUSTIFICATION
TO SEE MORE TRANSFORMATION



CONCLUSION



PRAYER: StoryChanger, you have changed my story with your story and therefore help me to change by believing your story. Amen.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What changes would you like to see in your life?
2. How have you tried to change and what happened?
3. How should we view those who try to re-define sin?
4. Are you in the "Such am I" or the "Such was I" group?
5. Which of the three changes are most influential in your life?
6. How can you increase the rate of change in your life?

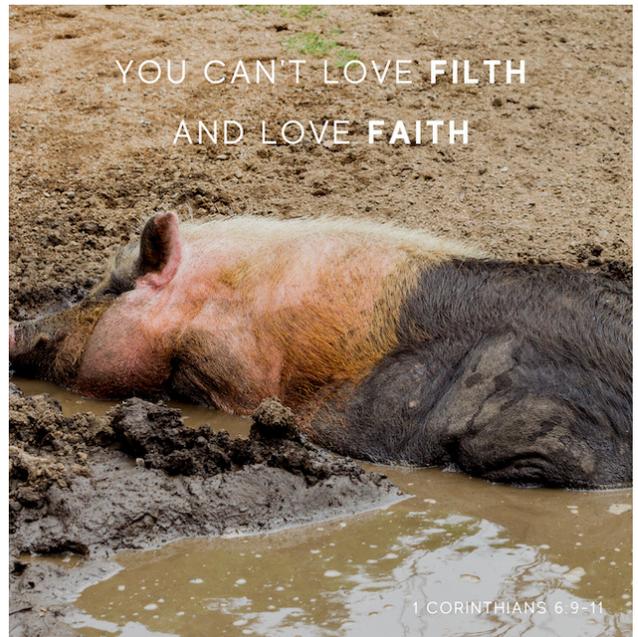
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1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-11

WE WERE **DIRTY** AND **DAMNED**



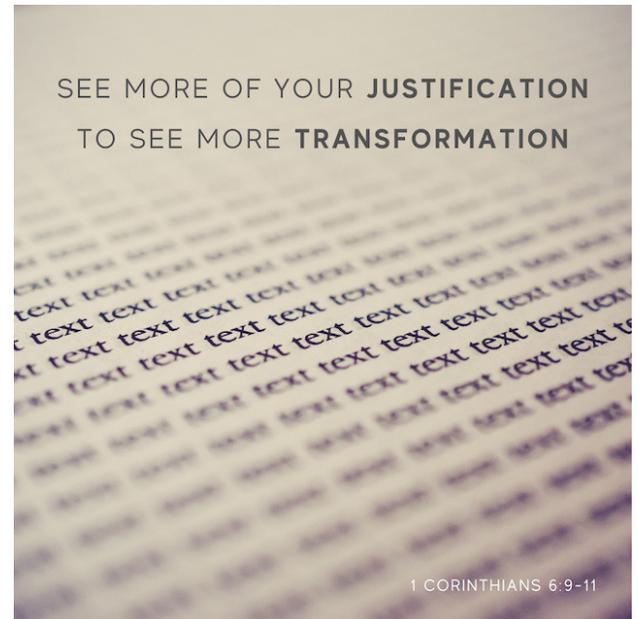
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CHANGE YOUR STORY BY
BELIEVING THE **STORYCHANGER'S** STORY