

“MEDICAL MODEL HOPELESSNESS”

First Corinthians 6.9-11

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How many of you have heard of the disease of kleptomania? Kleptomania used to be the psychological description of what was once thought to be the disease of thievery. The Greek κλέπτω meaning to steal, and μανία, meaning madness, frenzy, or delirium.¹ Thus, an illness that makes you steal.

Anyone ever heard of Wade Boggs? He was the Hall of Fame third baseman for the Boston Red Sox who got in trouble for his affairs with numerous women back in 1988.² I recall Boggs admitting during an interview to being afflicted with and being treated for what he called sexual addiction.

It was widely accepted that Wade Boggs had the disease of sexual addiction, something the actor Charlie Sheen has also claimed to be afflicted with. Thereby, adulterers are relieved of any responsibility for their adulteries. A married guy who visited our Church back in the day told me, “Women throw themselves at me. What am I supposed to do?” I recommended faithfulness to his wife.

How many of you have ever heard of Alcoholics Anonymous? Listen to this statement from the AA official website:

“*Alcoholics Anonymous*® is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.”³

Alcoholics and alcoholism. Their terms. AA promotes the idea that the person who cannot control his drinking of alcohol and who gets drunk all the time is an alcoholic who is overcome by a disease known as alcoholism. So widespread is the notion that alcoholism is a disease for which there is no remedy that AA’s mantra, “Once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic,” is accepted by virtually everyone these days.⁴

Interestingly, “Several court cases in the United States have recognized Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) as a religious organization, or as having sufficient religious components, to implicate the Establishment Clause of

¹ Bauer, Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), pages 547 & 615.

² http://www.mywiseowl.com/articles/Wade_Boggs 4/16/05

³ http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org/default/en_about.cfm 4/16/05

⁴ http://www.aa.org/bigbookonline/en_BigBook_chapt3.pdf, page 33.

the First Amendment, which prohibits government endorsement of religion,” even though AA suggests that alcoholics acknowledge God as you understand Him (whatever that means).⁵

Here is another one for you. Did you know that until 1973, the American Psychiatric Association diagnosed homosexuality as a disease?⁶ Nathan Purkiss, a historian specializing in the history of homosexuality, writes that homosexuality used to be viewed as a medical problem.⁷

I have touched on four different kinds of behavior: stealing, adultery, getting drunk, and engaging in sex with people of the same sex. Have you noticed a pattern here? In each case, the medical community, which would include psychiatrists, diagnosed such behaviors as medical issues.

Interesting, is it not? If you steal things, you have an illness. If you commit adultery many times, you are sick. If you habitually buy wine, beer, or whiskey and get drunk, you have a disease. And if you are a guy who has sex with guys or a girl who has sex with girls, until 1973, you were diagnosed by psychiatrists as having a medical issue.

Of course, psychiatrists no longer diagnose homosexuality as a medical problem because they have discarded the notion that there is such a thing as right and wrong when it comes to sexual behavior. So, bowing to political correctness, homosexuality was removed from the American Psychiatric Association’s list of mental illnesses.

I think it is time to turn to the Bible. The Bible is the Word of God. The Bible is the authoritative source of truth about the condition of humanity and the nature of God. The Bible is true. And the Bible has the solutions to each and every one of our race’s spiritual problems, whether or not I have mentioned them this morning.

My text for this message is First Corinthians 6.9-11. When you find that passage, I invite you to stand for the reading of God’s Word:

- 9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,
- 10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.
- 11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

The Apostle Paul undeniably sets forth four conclusions in the passage we just read:

First, IT IS CONCLUDED THAT THERE IS AN ETERNAL DESTINY SOME WILL NOT ENJOY

Paul begins verse 9 with this question: “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?”

Keeping in mind that Paul was writing to Christian Church members in the Greek city of Corinth, he reminds his readers that a specific category of people *will not* inherit the kingdom of God. To simplify what Paul asserts with a rhetorical question, certain people will not go to heaven when they die.

⁵ <https://x.com/i/grok/share/bKy1lEMUovgttl1zEGb0z9wkG>

⁶ <http://userwww.sfsu.edu/~cpf/1997/purkiss.html> 4/16/05

⁷ Ibid.

What does this mean? It means that there is a heaven to be gained and a Hell to be shunned. Whether people want to admit it or not, the Lord Jesus Christ very definitely did have more to say about Hell while He walked among us than He said about heaven.

What kind of people will go to Hell? What kind of people will be denied access to heaven and will not inherit the kingdom of God? Paul indicated that it will be those who are “unrighteous.” But what does it mean to be labeled “unrighteous”?

Read the Bible through, and you will see that Adam and Eve fell from God’s favor and were expelled from the Garden of Eden because they sinned and *became* unrighteous. The angels of heaven who were cast out were those who forfeited their righteousness by following Satan’s rebellion against God. Thus, a person who is “unrighteous” is someone who is out of favor with God, as well as being someone who does things that offend a holy and just God. Angels became unrighteous. Adam and Eve became unrighteous. However, you and every other human being, save the Lord Jesus, were born unrighteous because we were conceived in iniquity, Psalm 51.5.

What are the implications of this? There are several, one being that you cannot just do anything you want to do and expect to go to heaven when you die. There are definite consequences for the choices you make and the deeds that you do. This is why it is so crucial that parents train their children by correcting them to understand adverse consequences for both disobedience and foolishness.⁸ One of those consequences, the direct result of being unrighteous in the sight of God, is that you will go to Hell when you die.

The Second Conclusion Has To Do With THE BEHAVIOR OF THOSE WHO ARE DAMNED

Paul continues, ⁹ ... Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

¹⁰ Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

When Paul wrote, “Be not deceived,” he was urging his readers not to be fooled by appearances. Things are not always as they seem. And you cannot evaluate the reality of a person’s spiritual condition, or the eternal destiny of a person’s soul, by his likability and charming personality. Keep in mind that “Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.”⁹

What Paul gives his readers in verses 9 and 10 are indicators that reveal the true state of a person’s soul, the actual destiny a person is hurtling headlong toward to claim the genuine fruit of his unrighteousness. And what did he give his readers? Not a list of illnesses, but a list of sins.

Consider this list of sins one at a time:

First, there are those who are fornicators. What is a fornicator? Strictly speaking, fornication can either refer to all types of sinful sexual activity, which is every kind of sexual conduct outside marriage, or it can refer to sexual sin committed by a person who is not married. In context, the word here refers to a person who has sex with someone he is not married to. That includes pornography! I wonder how many young men remain single because of their involvement with pornography.

Second, idolaters. Idolaters are, of course, those who bow down to statues to worship them, or those who pay homage to something or someone other than God. This was strictly forbidden by God when He gave Moses

⁸ 1 Samuel 15.23; Proverbs 26.3

⁹ 2 Corinthians 11.14

the Ten Commandments.¹⁰ Actually, whenever *anything* is more important to you than God you are guilty of the sin of idolatry.

Next, there are adulterers. An adulterer is a person who is married, but who engages in sexual activity of any kind with someone other than the person he or she is married to. Excuse me, but that would also include online pornography.

Fourth, those who are effeminate. This word, *μαλακός*, refers to the passive partner in a homosexual activity.¹¹

“Abusers of themselves with mankind” refers to the other partner in a homosexual encounter; such a man engages in sexual activity with a person of his own sex.¹²

Sixth, are thieves. No one has any trouble understanding what a thief does. He takes property that does not belong to him, be it money, possessions, or the time his boss pays him for working, but he does not work when he is being paid to work.

Seventh, covetous, is a person who desires always to have more and who seeks to fulfill his desire for more by whatever means are available to him.¹³ But we must also remember that the Apostle Paul identified covetousness as a form of idolatry in Colossians 3.5.

Eighth, drunkards. Notice that Paul does not make use of a term equivalent to alcoholism but uses the term drunkard. What is a drunkard? A person who gets drunk. Simple.

Ninth, revilers. A reviler is a person who uses abusive language. Christians are encouraged by Paul to minister grace to those who hear us, Ephesians 4.29, but those who are not Christians are characterized as typically using abusive language.

Finally, we have extortioners. This word had a somewhat different meaning in Paul’s day than the English word presently has. The Greek word referred to someone who used force and violence to steal, while the commonly accepted meaning of extortion these days suggests more the threat of violence to get money from someone than actually resorting to violence.

Please keep in mind that people who behave in these ways are not going to Hell because they do these things. It is quite the other way around. It is because they are unrighteous people, people who are already on their way to Hell, that they routinely and habitually do such things. So, you see, this kind of behavior does not determine a person’s eternal destiny. Instead, this type of behavior *exposes* or *reveals* what a person’s eternal destiny already is.

One other thing to take note of before we move on: There is no room for the medical model in this list of sins. That is, you don’t see any mention of smallpox, measles, or the mumps in this list given to us by Paul. What you see here are sins, wrong deeds that people are guilty of committing, behavior that individuals choose to engage in and are therefore responsible for doing. These are not illnesses or diseases which come upon a person through no fault of his own, but deeds that are the direct result of decisions that people make. A person has to decide to engage in sinful sexual activity, whether it be fornication, adultery, homosexual activity, or dirty pictures. A person has to decide to steal or extort. A person chooses to use abusive language or bow down to a

¹⁰ Exodus 20.4-6

¹¹ Fritz Rienecker & Cleon Rogers, *Linguistic Key To The Greek New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Regency Reference Library, 1980), page 402.

¹² Bauer, Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), page 135.

¹³ Rienecker, page 402.

false god. But who decides to catch a cold? Who decides to contract influenza or West Nile virus? So you see, alcoholism is not a disease. Drunkenness is a sin. Likewise, homosexuality was never a disease, and psychiatrists were wrong to diagnose it as such.

Not to deny that any sin that is committed frequently enough can lead to habits and feelings of compulsion. There is no doubt that a drunk feels compelled to drink liquor. There is no doubt that a thief can feel compelled to steal. There is no doubt that homosexuals can come to the place where they feel a compulsion to engage in such sinful behavior, even *before* they have engaged in homosexual activity.

But do not confuse any of the sins with a disease that comes upon a person apart from the action of his own will and his own choices. These sins are committed by the people who commit them because they have chosen to commit them.

Third, THE HOPE THAT EXISTS

Alcoholics Anonymous asserts, "Once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic."¹⁴ They insist that those under the spell of booze are *always* alcoholics and that the best anyone can ever hope for is to be a recovering alcoholic.

Militant homosexual activists now insist that not only should homosexuality no longer be considered a mental illness, but that homosexual activity be accepted as normal and not in any way immoral or abnormal. But they go farther still, insisting that a person who is a homosexual will always be a homosexual, denying that there is such a thing as a saint who used to engage in homosexual conduct. Some even assert that homosexuality is an inherited trait that is determined by one's genes, though there is no real science to support such claims. It is merely an effort on the part of the homosexual community to establish that such behavior is normal, natural, and not in any way wrong. How could it be wrong if you are not responsible for it?

I could go on and on with many other examples, but there is one phrase in our text that shows the medical model of this behavior, the notion that this is just the way you are and that there is nothing to be done about such behavior, which is entirely wrong. In First Corinthians 6.11, Paul wrote,

"And such were some of you."

Consider the Corinthian congregation, comprised of people who had been born and raised in the horribly wicked port city of Corinth. In a place where any boy could steal an animal and take it to a pagan temple and exchange it for sexual favors with either male or female religious prostitutes, there were very few in that city who had not committed fornication, adultery, thievery, homosexuality, idolatry, and who knows what else?

Yet Paul acknowledged that the Corinthian Christians were those who *used* to be that way:

"And such were some of you."

No recovering alcoholics in that Church. They were men and women who used to be drunks. No people with repressed urges, but men and women who used to be fornicators, who used to be adulterers, who used to be effeminate, and who used to be abusers of themselves with mankind:

"And such were some of you."

Do you see what this phrase means, my friend? It means there is hope for the so-called sex addict. It means there is hope for the so-called alcoholic. It means there is hope for the so-called kleptomaniac. It means there is hope for the man who thinks there is no way he will ever bring his abusive speech under control. It

¹⁴ http://www.aa.org/bigbookonline/en_BigBook_chapt3.pdf, page 4 4/16/05

means there is hope of a straight life for the person who is convinced he is a homosexual. It means there is hope for the person who is an idolater or covetous. It meant there was hope for me, who, as a young boy, spent more time in the principal's office for out-of-control misconduct than any other two students in my school than anyone who now knows me can imagine. You do not have to be that way for the rest of your life: "And such were some of you."

Finally, THE CONCLUSION THAT HOPE EXISTS ONLY FOR THOSE WHO ADMIT THESE PRACTICES ARE SINS

Our text closes with these words: "but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

The operative words in this phrase are "washed," "sanctified," and "justified." Those are words that have to do with sins, not sickness, and not illnesses. Sins are washed away in the blood of Jesus Christ. Sanctification involves a sinner being set apart for God's use and separated from their habitual practice of sin. Justified has to do with a sinner being pronounced righteous in the sight of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

You see, when the angel told Joseph that the virgin Mary was going to give birth to the Lord Jesus Christ, the angel said to Joseph,

"thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."¹⁵

That is very important to remember. If idolatry is a sin that you commit, there is hope for you because Jesus Christ saves from sins, even the sin of idolatry. If drunkenness is a sin that you commit, there is hope for you because Jesus Christ saves from sins, even the sin of drunkenness. If sex sins are sins that you commit, and not the result of some disease called sex addiction, there is hope for you because Jesus Christ saves from sins. What a debt of gratitude I owe to my unsaved parents, lost teachers, and Christ-rejecting school principals who, not understanding what they were doing, always treated my disruptive behavior as morally wrong and in need of correction.

Some politically correct people get very angry with preachers like me, because they think I am heartless and cruel for saying that certain types of behavior are sinful instead of you being born that way.

But they seem to be unaware of the fact that it is God Who assigns responsibility for our behavior to each one of us, and that it is God who calls my disobedience and the breaking of His laws (from idolatry, to theft, to drunkenness, to covetousness, to disobeying parents) sins.

And God's way is most merciful and hopeful. You see, if I am a drunk through no fault of my own, and this entire problem with getting drunk is a disease, then there is little hope for me. I may succeed in my effort to stop drinking, but I am still bound for Hell.

But if drunkenness is a sin that can be forgiven by God and washed clean in the shed blood of Christ, then there is hope for the worst drunk, with hope being deliverance to Christ in heaven for all eternity.

What about you? I maintain that the so-called medical model of behavior, that suggests everything that is wrong with you is the result of some disease, or mental illness, or some other thing that is entirely beyond your control, leaves you with no hope of remedy.

What can you do about disease? What control do you have over measles and the flu once you catch it? None, really. But if these kinds of behavior are sins and not illnesses, if they are the result of choices that you have made that you may not even remember, and not the result of some inherited trait or gene, then they are

¹⁵ Matthew 1.21

your sins and not someone else's. And if they are your sins and not someone else's, you can be forgiven, you can be delivered from them.

But you have to understand that sins can only be forgiven by Jesus Christ. Only He is the Savior. And He only saves from sins. So, if you refuse to give up the lie that these things are diseases, or not your own fault for the choices you've made, then you will be stuck with the problem, you will die with the problem, and the problem (which will turn out to be a sin, after all) will drag your soul into Hell.

"Pastor, you don't understand. What you say doesn't apply to me, because I am bipolar." Are you sure? In his book addressing chemical imbalances, brain disorders, and disobedience, the author writes, "there is no such thing as a consistent, verifiable chemical imbalance or neuroanatomical abnormality among the psychiatric diagnoses. Blood tests and brain scans are not even used in making a psychiatric diagnoses."¹⁶

Let us recognize that sin does not lie at the root of every issue we must deal with in our lives. The man born blind was not blind because of personal sin. My late brother in Christ, Jim Seihnert, did not live in a wheelchair because he sinned as a child and was hit by a car.

That said, we do ourselves and our loved ones great harm when we deny that behavior and conduct choices are *our* responsibility, and when we say or do what displeases God, from failure to honor our parents to failure to respect other people's property rights, treat their bodies as inviolate outside of marriage, and so forth and so on.

The first remedial step following the acknowledgment of God is to admit that displeasing Him in any way, whether through behavior or belief, is sinful and deserves punishment. The whole point of the Lord Jesus Christ's mission and ministry to us is deliverance from the appropriate punishment for our sins that God's holiness demands and that only He can provide.

¹⁶ Edward T. Welch, *Blame It On The Brain? Distinguishing Chemical Imbalances, Brain Disorders, and Disobedience*, Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P & R Publishing, 1998), page 106.