

Interpreting "inheriting the kingdom of God" in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10

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Passage: 1 Cor 6:1-11 *Lawsuits Discouraged*

- 1 Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous (√ *adikos*) and not before the saints?
- 2 Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent *to constitute* the smallest law courts?
- 3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life?
- 4 So if you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church?
- 5 I say *this* to your shame. *Is it so, that* there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren,
- 6 but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers?
- 7 Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?
- 8 On the contrary, you yourselves wrong (verb √ *adikeō*) and defraud. *You do* this even to *your* brethren.
- 9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous (√ *adikos*) will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,
- 10 nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.
- 11 Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

VARIOUS INTERPRETATIONS

Arminian View	Free Grace View		Reformed View
<p>Explanation: Arminian theology teaches that one may lose his/her salvation, especially for the sin of apostasy. Some would also teach that a believer can <i>seriously</i> fall away into a lifestyle of sin that would result in loss of salvation. In the case of 1 Cor 6:9-10, they would take the view that "the unrighteous" will not <u>enter</u> the kingdom (i.e., be eternally saved) precisely because they were living in a lifestyle of sin that would characterize them as "fornicators," etc.</p> <p>Problem: Many clear passages (e.g., Rom 8:38-39, John 10:27-29) teach that salvation cannot be lost.</p>	<p>Option 1: Vv 9-10 Address Believers - so Jody Dillow, Z. Hodges - ("not inherit" implies loss of reward and/or reigning w/Christ in the kingdom)</p> <p>Explanation: This Free Grace view takes note that Paul uses the adj. <i>adikos</i> (unrighteous) of unbelievers in vs 1 and the related vb <i>adikeō</i> (to wrong; act unrighteously) of believers in vs 8. Thus the use of the adj. <i>adikos</i> in vs 9 <i>could be</i> referring to believers. Since "inherit" is often used in the NT of gaining something by works or merit, this view concludes that the issue is one of a true believer not gaining his possible inheritance in the kingdom (though he would not lose his salvation).</p> <p>Comment: This view is certainly possible and the conclusion about rewards/reigning is biblical. But passages like 1 Cor 15:50 do seem to use "inheriting" in the sense of <i>entering</i>.</p>	<p>Option 2: Vv 9-10 Address Unbelievers - so René López, J. Paul Tanner ("not inherit" indicates that unbelievers—still in their sins having never believed—will not enter the kingdom)</p> <p>Explanation: An alternative Free Grace view makes the same observation about <i>adikos/adikeō</i>, but realizes there could be a logical reason why Paul would be addressing unbelievers in vs 9. Paul lists various categories of unrighteous unbelievers who will not <u>enter</u> the kingdom. His point: true believers can do these things, but if sinful unbelievers like these do not enter Christ's kingdom and thus incur God's wrath for such sinful behavior, then believers should not want to imitate their sinful behavior. Rather they should live like their new status—"washed, sanctified."</p> <p>Comment: This view holds a similar view of rewards in general, but sees in this case a legitimate use of "inheriting" as <i>entering</i> (as in 1 Cor 15:50 and Mt 25:34). Also consistent with Paul's teaching in Eph 5:1-14 (note esp. vv 5-6). [RE "sons of disobedience," note carefully Eph 2:2; Col 3:6].</p>	<p>Explanation: Reformed theology argues that no one gets into the kingdom as an <i>unrighteous person</i>. Those whose lifestyle is characterized as a "fornicator," "idolater," etc., is <u>proof</u> they never had become a Christian. They do not <u>enter</u> the kingdom precisely because they did not live a life of persevering in faith, godliness, and good works.</p> <p>Problem: Why would Paul warn believers of doing things they supposedly could not do (Eph 5:1-14; Col 3:5-11)? 1Cor 6:8 admits they do.</p>

Cf. Rene Lopez article, *BibSac* 164:653 (Jan-Mar 2007): 59-73.