BUILT DIFFERENT

LESSON SIX

COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY NOTES

1 CORINTHIANS 6:1-8

Thomas Schreiner, In the *Tyndale New Testament Commentary*, discusses the lawsuits among believers at Corinth:

1. The first word in the Greek is the word *dare*, showing that appealing to the 'unrighteous' (*adikon*, CSB) to resolve a legal *dispute* (*pragma*) with another believer is outrageous. The case should be brought before the 'saints' (*hagion*, CSB). The use of the word 'unrighteous' is intentional since believers are acting unrighteously (*adikeite*, v. 8), acting like the 'unrighteous' (*adikoi*, ESV, v. 9) who will not enter the kingdom. On the other hand, the believers are God's 'saints' (CSB; 1:2; 6:11), yet they are not acting like God's holy people but like the people of the world. Perhaps, as noted above, we have another instance when the rich and elite were using their wealth and social status to discriminate against the poor.

2–3. The scandal of believers taking their legal cases before unbelievers is explained further. Indeed, what is happening is incompatible with being God's holy people, since the 'saints will judge the world' (CSB). We see elsewhere that God's people will rule and reign. For instance, Wisdom 3:8 says that God's people 'will govern [*krinousin*, 'judge'] nations' (3:8, NRSV). Other texts also look forward to the rule of believers on the last day (cf. Dan. 7:22; Matt. 19:28; Rev. 20:4). The argument here is from the greater to the lesser. If saints will judge the world, which may mean 'rule' the world, they should have the ability to resolve trivial lawsuits cropping up among them. The same kind of argument, an argument from the greater to the lesser, is advanced in verse 3. As in verse 2, the argument is introduced with the words *Do you not know?* Believers *will judge* [*krinousin*] *angels*, and here the word 'judge' does not necessarily mean that believers will assess and mete out rewards and punishments for angels. It probably means that believers will 'rule' over angels, though it is difficult to know if the angels are good, bad or both. We see a similar kind of argument in Hebrews 2:5–18, where rule of the coming world belongs to human beings and not to angels. This rule is given to believers because they belong to Jesus Christ, for Jesus will allow believers to sit on the throne with him to rule the world (Rev. 3:21), and this rule presumably includes rule over angels. If believers are going to rule over angels, they should be able to resolve disputes over matters of ordinary life.

4. The lawsuits relate to ordinary matters of this life ('matters of this life', *biotika kriteria*, NASB). They are minor legal matters that are annoying and bothersome, and it harms the church's reputation that they cannot resolve such disputes. In this verse Paul summons the church to action, though the precise course of action prescribed is debated. The KJV represents one interpretation, in which Paul calls upon social inferiors—those disrespected in the church—to resolve the matter: 'set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church'. This reading is quite attractive, for once again Paul would be reminding the Corinthians that their pretensions for status are contrary to the cross. According to this reading, those of lower status in the church should adjudicate the issue before the church. It is more likely, however, that Paul asks a question here, which is reflected well by the NIV: *do you ask for a ruling from those whose way of life is scorned in the church?* This second option is more likely, since what concerns Paul in this paragraph is that the believers are taking their legal cases to unbelievers. The word for *those … scorned (exouthenemenous)* is a strong one, and Paul uses it for shock effect. The social elite of the world, before whom the Corinthians act so obsequiously, are 'despised' before God. The term used here for unbelievers is rhetorical and hyperbolic, since the intent is to galvanize the church to rethink its ways and to resolve matters internally.

5–6. If Paul wrote earlier about not shaming them (1 Cor. 4:14), now he informs them that he writes about lawsuits *to shame* them. In an honour—shame society such a remark would wound deeply, but Paul is audacious enough to say this because he is scandalized by their lawsuits. He continues to reprove the Corinthians with another shaming remark. The Corinthians, as we know from chapters 1 to 4, were proud of their wisdom. But if they are so wise, Paul asks, how can it be the case that there is not a single wise person in the church who is able to adjudicate the legal cases that have arisen? Apparently, the church is entirely bereft of wisdom, since it needs to appeal to unbelievers to resolve disputes arising among fellow-believers. As he speaks to this issue, Paul emphasizes the kinship

of believers: 'brother goes to court against brother' (CSB). They do not resolve the conflict within the family but turn to unbelievers. Paul was not distressed that the church experienced conflict, for disagreements are to be expected; what annoyed him was that they were going to court before unbelievers to resolve their conflicts.

7–8. People engage in lawsuits to win, to be vindicated and to have their rights reasserted. But the very fact that the Corinthians have taken their cases to unbelievers, that they have gone to court, is 'an utter failure' (NKJV). Or, as the NIV felicitously puts it: *you have been completely defeated already.* The believers were looking for a victory in court, but Paul informs them that the very presence of lawsuits signals a stunning defeat and reversal. It would be far better for them to suffer wrong and *be cheated*. As Paul says in Romans 12:17, 'Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone' (see also 1 Thess. 5:15). Paul's admonition here accords with the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:39: 'But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.' Instead of 'suffering wrong' (*adikeisthe*), the Corinthians were actually 'doing wrong' (*adikeite*), and instead of 'being cheated' (*apostereisthe*), they were 'cheating' (*apostereite*). And what makes the entire situation intolerable to Paul is that they were doing such to your brothers and sisters (*adelphous*). Those who were kin, those who were family, those who were fellow-believers, were being mistreated by other believers.[1]

1 CORINTHIANS 6:9–11

In the *Pillar New Testament Commentary*, Roy Ciampa explains how verses 9–11 connects the discussion on sexual immorality and lawsuits amongst believers:

6:9–10 Following the train of the argument in 6:1–20 is not an easy task. If Paul addresses the problem of lawsuits in 6:1–8 and going to prostitutes in 6:12–20, where does 6:9–11, which concerns inheriting the kingdom, fit? Most commentators understand these verses to go with what precedes rather than what follows. But there is far from unanimity, and little help is given with appreciating their relevance to Paul's instructions not to fight lawsuits. What could have led Paul to speak of "inheriting the kingdom of God," a phrase he uses only twice outside of these verses in his letters (1 Cor. 15:50; Gal. 5:21)?

Part of the problem is the fact that the verses in question can be justifiably seen to look both ways. With the initial reference in the vice list to the "sexually immoral," they introduce Paul's instructions in 6:12–20 (as well as look back to 5:1–13). Furthermore, if temple prostitution is in Paul's sights, the second item, "idolaters," may also be significant. However, the contextual links with 6:1–8 are even more impressive. The conjunction "or" connects the two, as does the appearance of words in Greek from the same root: "unrighteous" in v. 9 and "justified" in v. 11 recall "unrighteous" in v. 1 and "to wrong" in vv. 7–8.

Before considering how vv. 9–11 function in the argument of chapter 6, it is worth inquiring as to their possible origin. Here we are not asking from where Paul derived this possibly traditional piece of paraenesis, but what led him to include it at this point in the argument. 1 Corinthians is riddled with scriptural quotations and allusions. We have argued that two such passages from the Old Testament seem to have played a formative role in 6:1–8, even though they are not explicitly cited: Daniel 7:22 in 6:2–3; and Exodus 18/Deuteronomy 1 in 6:1–6. The broader Old Testament contexts of both of these represent sources of influence for Paul's reference to inheriting the kingdom of God in vv. 9–11.

In Deuteronomy 1 and Exodus 18 Moses is depicted as appointing judges in comparable fashion to Paul in vv. 1–6. Both passages from the Pentateuch precede the giving of the law. In Deuteronomy 1–6 the point is made repeatedly that the people of God will *inherit* the land if they obey the covenant stipulations enshrined in the Ten Commandments. For example, Deuteronomy 6:1 states: "Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the ordinances which the Lord your God commanded me to

[1] Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, ed. Eckhard J. Schnabel, vol. 7, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2018), 118–120.

teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to inherit it." Furthermore, in Deuteronomy 3:21 the land they will inherit is described as "the kingdoms" of the peoples they will dispossess. In Exodus 19 they are told that keeping this covenant will enable them to become a "*kingdom* of priests and a holy nation." In vv. 9–11 Paul connects inheritance with a list of ten vices. Whereas the Decalogue and Paul's vice list overlap in content, the similarity is not so marked as to suggest dependence. It is not that Paul is giving a second Decalogue. Nonetheless, that Paul and Moses both gave God's people ten words to ensure they would receive their inheritance and become part of a kingdom is intriguing. Paul acts like Moses in a number of places in his letters. Furthermore, Paul has a high view of Exodus traditions, not least in 1 Corinthians.78 That Paul could have reflected on the Moses material typologically, seeing a similarity in his situation and theirs, and been led to speak of inheriting the kingdom is quite possible. He could in fact have easily quoted Deuteronomy 16:20 as a way of moving from the notions of judging righteously to inheritance: "Justice and only justice you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land which the Lord your God gives you" (RSV).

In Daniel 7 "the saints" are said to have been given judgment to exercise (7:22), a function Paul echoes for "the saints" (1 Cor. 6:1) in vv. 2–3. In the case of Daniel we do not even have to move outside of the chapter to find as many as nine references to the *kingdom*. In fact, in the same verse, Daniel 7:22, it is stated that not only was "judgment given to the saints," but "the saints received the kingdom." Whereas in Deuteronomy the inheritance, though desirable and from God, is temporal and limited, namely, the land, in Daniel 7 the kingdom, as in 1 Corinthians 6:9–11, is everlasting and universal (see esp. 7:27). Thus we need look no further for the inspiration of references to "inheriting the kingdom" such as we find here. The Old Testament texts which influenced him in vv. 1–6 continued, it seems, to make an impact in vv. 9–11.

That Paul's words in vv. 9–11 function as a warning to those Corinthian Christians fighting lawsuits against one another (and to those going to prostitutes) is manifestly clear: people who act in that fashion will not inherit the kingdom. However, the likely origin of 6:9–11 suggests another function for the verses in context. In Exodus, Deuteronomy, and Daniel the references to inheriting the kingdom are set in the context of suffering. Whereas in the former texts the people have come out from slavery in Egypt (Exodus) or have endured the wilderness wanderings (Deuteronomy), in Daniel the theme of hardship and destruction matches both the courses of the four kingdoms which are narrated in rapid succession and the historical setting of God's people in exile. In both cases inheriting the kingdom is held out as encouragement to fidelity and obedience in difficult circumstances in the knowledge that the wicked will one day face judgment when God's people are vindicated.

It is this notion, with both its components of warning and its hope-inspiring promise, that provides a bridge between 1 Corinthians 6:7–8 and the following three verses. Paul states in 6:9 that *wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God*. The word translated *wrongdoers* here is the same one translated "ungodly" in v. 1, which also shares the same root as the verb used to describe the Corinthians as people who "do wrong" to their brothers and sisters in the previous verse. Paul implies that the litigious Corinthians have been acting the part of unrighteous people who would face rejection in the final judgment and that they had better change their ways so as to distance themselves as far as possible from such behaviors.

If wrongdoers or unrighteous people *will not* inherit the kingdom, it is natural to ask, Who *will* inherit the kingdom? The answer is, those whose faith commitment to Christ leads them to reject the immoral, greedy, and idolatrous behavior which marks the lives of pagans, and, more precisely in this context, those who do not wrong and cheat others and who would prefer to suffer righteously than to subject their brothers and sisters to the injustices of unrighteous courts (vv. 7–8). Vv. 9–11 provide encouragement to the Corinthians to follow Paul's difficult advice in vv. 7–8 (not to dispute with one another, even if it means you suffer); those who choose to suffer wrong are the kind of people who will inherit the kingdom, a curious paradox. With respect to vv. 1–8, vv. 9–11 act as both a warning and an encouragement to follow Paul's instructions. That Paul has a positive purpose for these verses as well is clear from v. 11, which assures the Corinthians that Paul thinks better of them.

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It is not uncommon in Paul's letters for the apostle to follow up the thought of present suffering with the encouragement of future glory. It is a biblical pattern of thought with which he is apparently quite familiar. Romans 8:17 demonstrates that in Paul's mind suffering is linked with inheritance: "Now if we are children, then we are *heirs—heirs* of God and co-*heirs* with Christ, if indeed we share in his *sufferings*." The example par excellence of suffering leading to glory is of course Christ himself. In 2 Corinthians 4:17 suffering and glory are also connected in Paul's own experience: "Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all."

In context, vv. 9–11 serve as both a warning and an encouragement not to do wrong to one another as by taking each other to court. Paul argues that an eschatological worldview, which the Corinthians lacked or at least failed to appreciate, properly understood would have led them to seek to either settle the dispute internally (vv. 2–3) or gladly suffer the financial loss over which the dispute arose (vv. 9–11). Property and material possessions are of little consequence to those destined to inherit the kingdom! An indifferent attitude to material possessions in the light of eschatological realities is further pressed upon the Corinthians in 7:29–31.

The vice list in vv. 9–10 contains ten items, six of which are repeated from 5:11. The other four expand the most relevant vices in chapters 5 and 6, namely, sexual immorality (adultery and different types of homosexual behavior) and greed (thieves). The order of the vices changes for no apparent reason.

Whereas one new term, "thieves," belongs especially to the concerns of 6:1–11, the other three deal with sexual sin, and are thus in line with the main subject matter of the rest of 1 Corinthians 5–7. "Adulterers" refers to married people having sexual relations outside marriage. The same term is employed in the Decalogue (LXX Exod. 20:13; LXX Deut. 5:18 [17]) and the Holiness code (LXX Lev. 20:10).

With the next two terms Paul refers to homosexual behavior of one form or another. Rather than referring to "male prostitutes and practicing homosexuals" (TNIV), they are better understood as referring to those who willingly play the passive and active roles in homosexual acts. Paul is not discussing "homosexuals" per se, but homosexual acts (commonly engaged in by Roman men who were also active in heterosexual relationships). In the Roman world, homosexual relations were invariably exploitative relations between men of quite contrasting social statures. It was not uncommon for married men to practice heterosexual sex with their wives (and female slaves and prostitutes) and to also engage in homosexual relations with male prostitutes or slave boys or other young men of lower class who had little freedom to refuse. Romans did not think in terms of sexual orientation or identities, but that proper masculinity was to be expressed in taking the active, dominant role in any sexual act. To desire or willingly play a passive homosexual role was considered shameful, but it was expected that men of stature would penetrate people of lesser status (whether women or men) but not be penetrated themselves. The Jewish and Christian perspective affirmed by Paul was quite different.

Paul's opposition to all homosexual behavior (clearly targeting those who engaged in it freely and willingly) seems to derive from Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, which represent absolute bans. Paul's opposition to homosexual acts was not because he had not thought about the subject88 or had simply taken over a conventional list of vices from Hellenistic authors, whether Jewish or secular (the view of Scroggs). Paul opposed homosexual behavior on the basis of creation theology and because it is marked as a vice in the Torah and was stressed as a vice by Jews.90

The vice lists in 5:9–11 and 6:9–10 have obvious relevance to the paragraphs in which they occur. They also function as a thinly veiled threat as Paul deals with other subjects in the letter. Those guilty of such sins will not inherit the kingdom and ought to be excluded from the congregation in Corinth. For the Corinthian Christians guilty of going to prostitutes, the lists, both of which begin with "sexual immorality," would have been ringing in their ears when they heard Paul's instructions in 6:12–20. Those whom Paul accuses of "objective" idolatry in 10:1–22 (see the comments there) would have recalled the reference to "idolaters" in 6:9 and the serious way in which the incestuous man was dealt

with in chapter 5. Likewise 11:21, Paul's comment about abuses at the Lord's Supper ("For in eating each one goes ahead with his own meal; one is hungry and another is *drunk*") recalls the "drunkard" in 5:11 and 6:10. The vice lists hang over Paul's instructions at least through chapter 11. On rereading the letter, or on hearing it again, the vice lists are passages that would come to the foreground, especially for some of the original audience.

6:11 The ten terms used in the previous two verses are nouns that stand for individuals whose lives are characterized by the sin in question. It is not that any person who ever commits one of the sins will not inherit the kingdom; Paul is thinking of persistent rebellion against God, not the temporary backsliding or lapse of the believer. With pastoral sensitivity Prior explains: "Paul is not talking about isolated acts of unrighteousness, but about a whole way of life pursued persistently by those who thus indicate that they would be aliens in the kingdom of truth and light." The New Testament teaches consistently that perseverance is a sign of election (cf. 1 John 3:4–10, etc.). Professing Christians who live such lives are tragically among those who will not inherit God's kingdom.

The warning of vv. 9–10 is not properly understood without v. 11, which injects a positive note of affirmation and hope: "That is what some of you were. But [now things are different]." Paul stresses the change that many of the Corinthian Christians had undergone. Some of them were enmeshed in such vices, but no longer. The words "some of you" do not indicate that Paul considers only some in the church to be *washed*, ... *sanctified*, ... *justified* (truly saved), but that only some were saved from an overtly sinful lifestyle. If for Christians the future has invaded the present, a decisive break has also been made with the past; the once/now motif is just as important as the already/not yet. Paul uses the concept of inheritance to refer to that which all believers will receive in the kingdom because they are sons of Abraham through faith (cf. Rom. 4:13; 8:17; Gal. 3:29; 4:4–7; Titus 3:5, which forge a link between being an heir and a son to faith and promise).

Three verbs underscore the change: the Corinthians were washed, sanctified, and justified. Each is preceded in the Greek by the strong adversative, "but," to stress the transformation that has been effected by God. First they have been cleansed from the filth of the types of sin listed in vv. 10–11. The Corinthians are clean before God. Since the washing is only one part of Paul's threefold description of their conversion, the reference is primarily to spiritual transformation and only by implication to baptism which signifies it. Secondly, they have been sanctified, separated from a godless lifestyle, having received a holy status (cf. 1:1, 30). The Corinthians are holy, possessed by God. Thirdly, they have been justified or declared righteous in spite of their many vices, set in a right relation to God (cf. 1:30). The Corinthians stand vindicated by God. God has done something dramatic in and for the Corinthian believers. As different people, they ought to live differently (learning to resolve their differences in healthy and edifying ways rather than fighting lawsuits against one another). The indicative implies the imperative. All three actions refer to a break with the old life (vv. 9–10) and the beginning of a new life that leads to a new lifestyle. The three metaphors describe the same reality, namely, their conversion. The words also recall the temple motif, so prominent in the letter: in biblical and Pauline thought only those who have been sanctified and cleansed can enter into God's presence and be used in the worship of God.

The unselfconscious trinitarianism of the description of how the change came about is striking: "in the name of *the Lord Jesus Christ* and in the *Spirit* of our *God*." The most explicit instance of trinitarian thought in Paul's letters occurs in the famous benediction of 2 Corinthians 12:14. It is foundational to Paul's understanding of salvation that it involves the cooperative work of all three persons of the Godhead, to use the language of Chalcedon. 1 Corinthians 1:4–7, 2:4–5, 2:12, and 6:19–20 are other places in the letter (cf. 2 Cor. 1:21–22) where salvation is predicated either explicitly or implicitly on the threefold work of the triune God. The terms also reinforce the eschatological nature of the transformation the Corinthians (along with all other believers in Christ) have experienced. God's establishment of the Messiah (Christ) as Lord over all and his transformation of his people by the cleansing and renewing power and presence of the Holy Spirit were both part of the Old Testament picture of the wonderful changes that would be introduced with the in-breaking of the age to come and its overcoming of this present evil age.[2]

[2] Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids,

COMMENTARY NOTES

1 CORINTHIANS 6:12–20

In the *NICNT*, Gordon Fee explains the Corinthian position and Paul's response and admonition to flee sexual immorality:

12 As in the preceding two sections, Paul comes out swinging. In contrast to those sections, however, he does not begin by attacking their illicit behavior directly; rather, he confronts the theology on which that behavior is predicated. The clause "everything is permissible for me" is almost certainly a Corinthian theological slogan. This is confirmed by the way Paul cites it again later (10:23); in both cases he qualifies it so sharply as to negate it—at least as a theological absolute. The source of the slogan is debatable. Possibly the Corinthians had turned a Pauline position into a slogan for their own purposes. If so, their error would lie in making absolute what for Paul would always have been qualified by his "in Christ" perspective.279 For him it is only as one is in Christ that "everything is permitted me," and in any case that would have to do with adiaphora (the nonessentials: food, drink, days, circumcision, etc.), not with Christian ethics (how believers relate to others in the world) as such.

With this slogan we encounter for the first time in this letter another of its crucial terms, *exestin/exousia/exousiazo* (basically = "right to determine," hence "authority"). Along with its companions ("wisdom," "knowledge," "spiritual"), this is an area of tension between the Corinthians and Paul. Later (8:9) he speaks bitingly of "this *exousia* of yours," which some were using to abuse others in the matter of going to the pagan temples; and the entire argument that follows that (9:3–18) is over his own *exousia* to act in ways that had displeased them. What we have here, then, is a crisis of "authority" of another kind—over their "freedom to act as they pleased" without restraint. For Paul that is not freedom at all, but a form of bondage worse than before.

With the first qualifier Paul turns *exousia* on its head. Freedom is not to be for self but for others. The real question is not whether an action is "lawful" or "right" or even "all right," but whether it is good, whether it benefits. In light of the full context of this section that could perhaps mean, "to one's own benefit."283 Elsewhere in this letter, however, this word denotes benefiting someone else (it is parallel with "build up" in 10:23; cf. 10:33). Probably that is what lies behind the qualification here as well. Truly Christian conduct is not predicated on whether I have the *right* to do something, i.e., whether it is to my own benefit or not, but whether my conduct is *good*, meaning ultimately helpful to those around me.

The second qualifier constitutes a wordplay on *exousia*—nearly impossible to carry over into English—that gets at the heart of the present matter. They are saying, "I have *exousia* (freedom to act) with regard to *all* things"; Paul qualifies, "Yes, but I will not be *mastered* by *any*thing (or anybody)." At this distance one cannot be sure what Paul intends by this. Does he mean that one should not prate about "freedom" with regard to sexual sin when in fact a person is enslaved to the very thing that one is arguing to be under their own authority? In such a case, the sinner is merely self-deceived. Perhaps the "thing" Paul will not be enslaved to is *exousia* itself. There is a kind of self-deception that inflated spirituality promotes, which suggests to oneself that one is acting with freedom and authority, but which in fact is an enslavement of the worst kind—to the very freedom someone thinks they have. An especially attractive option, however, which ties this qualification specifically to the problem as it appears a bit later (vv. 15–16), is to understand the verb in light of its next use (7:4), its only other appearance in Paul. As the married partner "has authority over" the other's body, so this might refer to coming under the "power" of the prostitute. That is, by being joined to her in *porneia* the believer constitutes someone else, outside of Christ, as the unlawful lord over one's own body. In any case, their first slogan is simply not true—at least not as an absolute.

13–14 What comes next marks an abrupt change of direction. Paul, who has been talking about Christian freedom, suddenly shifts to the stomach and food, then moves to a theological statement about the body, followed by an affirmation of Christ's and our resurrection. At first read, none of this

MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 237–245.

seems to follow. Despite appearances, however, this is a very tight argument against the Corinthians' position about the human body, which they appear to have brought in alongside their stance on freedom. At issue ultimately is how the Corinthians were to understand the second clause in the first sentence (v. 13a, "and God will destroy them both"). Along with other English versions (NRSV, NEB, NAB), the original NIV had taken that to be Paul's own response to the Corinthians' "food for the stomach and the stomach for food." But by regarding the whole clause to have originated from Corinth, the present NIV almost certainly has moved in the right direction.289 That is, a part of the Corinthians' current program was to argue that all bodily functions are generally equal, and basically irrelevant for the life of the future, so "what's the problem?" Why not "sex for the body and the body for sex," since both sex and the body are unrelated to the life of the future. In the end God will destroy them both.

The power of Paul's response thus lies not with his negating their principle as such, but with his disallowing where they were prepared to go with it. In their view, as with the stomach, so the body is irrelevant in the coming kingdom of God. But not so Paul. The key for understanding lies with an analysis of the structure. Except for the crucial words of contrast in the application (v. 13, "not for sexual immorality but"), the sentences form a perfect parallelism (with chiasm in the first member of each):

Such striking parallelism indicates that the structure itself is purposeful, which in turn offers clues to many of the difficulties. First, the three *de's*, which have given so much trouble to translators, are readily explained. The *de* between the two propositions can only be adversative. Moreover, the clearly consecutive *de* between the two parts of Paul's response (v. 14) determines that its less clear earlier parallel (v. 13b) is also consecutive.

Second, the two propositions are in obvious contrast to each other. Both this arrangement and the rest of the argument make it plain that Paul's concern is altogether with the second one. The matter of food therefore is no issue here at all; rather, it is intended only to set up the issue of the body and sexual immorality. This suggests that, as in the opening barrage (v. 12), Proposition I is best understood as a Corinthian slogan, which apparently they have carried over to the body and sexual relations with prostitutes.294

In contrast to the opening salvo (v. 12), however, where the apostle refuses to agree with their slogan in its absolute form, here he is in fact in essential agreement. Both food and the stomach belong to the present age, and "God will do away with them both in the end" (NAB). What Paul will not let the Corinthians do is take *that* slogan, which has to do with the irrelevance of food restrictions, and apply it to illicit sexual relations. Paul's construction of the otherwise balanced sentence in part 1 of Proposition II, following hard on the heels of I as it does, implies that their reasoning went like this: "Since everything is permitted, and since food is for the stomach and the stomach for food (after all, God will destroy them both in the end), and since all bodily appetites are pretty much alike, that means that the body is for sex and sex for the body—because God will destroy them both in the end as well." But their conclusions are dead wrong—on both counts: The body is *not* for *porneia* but for the Lord; and it is *not* destined for destruction but for resurrection, the proof of which is Christ's resurrection.

Paul thus counters their argument with his own theological construct, formulated after the manner of theirs: "The body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." The rest of the argument will work out what this means. "The body is for the Lord" in the sense to be explained shortly (v. 14) and later (vv. 19–20). The work of redemption includes the whole person, which in the Jewish view of things includes the body. If the stomach is irrelevant for future existence, the body itself is not. Through Christ's own resurrection it has been stamped as belonging to eternity; it is destined for resurrection. Thus the body is also "for the Lord" in the present.

The second part, the rhetorical flourish "and the Lord for the body," is not so easy. This obviously cannot mean in the same complementary way that food and the stomach are meant for each other.

The statement itself was purposely created out of their slogan; it was therefore never intended to be pressed in detail. This is not to say that it is not true, but that it is not precise. Whatever else, it is not so much a statement about the Lord as it is a further statement about the body. Probably it means that the body belongs to the Lord because in his death and resurrection he has given himself for the body as part of that redemptive work300—they are, after all, destined for resurrection!

Thus the concluding affirmation of the resurrection (v. 14) corresponds to the preceding qualification (v. 13b) and serves as the theological basis for "the body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." As such it anticipates the more detailed argument at the end of the letter (chap. 15), where some are denying a future resurrection of believers (15:12). As in that argument, our resurrection is predicated on the resurrection of Christ: "God both raised the Lord, and he will raise us."302 Both are effected "by [God's] power" (cf. Rom. 1:4). This affirmation stands in bold contrast to the Corinthian view of spirituality, which apparently looked for a "spiritual" salvation that would finally be divested of the body. Lying behind this form of spirituality is a Greek view of the world that placed little or no value on the material order. Out of such a view developed the idea of the "immortality of the soul," that is, that the spirit is somehow immortal, but the body, along with the rest of the material order, is destined for destruction. This is a totally pagan view; the Christian creed says rather: "I believe … in the resurrection of the body." In stark contrast to the Greek view, the OT declares that at creation God looked on the universe that he had made and pronounced it good. The final consummation looks for a new heaven and a new earth; and in that new order the body is raised so that God's people will experience the final wholeness that God intended.

15 In the rest of this paragraph (vv. 15–17) Paul explains his reformulation of their slogan "the body is *not* for *porneia* but for the Lord," by applying it directly to their going to the prostitutes. The argument is in two parts, both introduced by the formula "Do you not know that?" (see on 3:16). The first assertion (v. 15), based on the preceding declaration (v. 14), is that the bodies of believers are "members" of the "body" of the Lord and therefore cannot be joined to a prostitute, to become "members" of her body. The rhetoric that follows (vv. 16–17) further explains the present set of questions, asserting on the basis of the divine affirmation in the creation narrative (Gen. 2:24) that in sexual intercourse two bodies become one, which is how a man becomes a "member" of her body. This in turn is contrasted to the union with Christ's "body," now expressed in terms of the Spirit. The result is another chiasm:

A Their bodies are members of Christ's body;
B therefore, they may not be members of a prostitute's.
B' Joined to a prostitute, they become one body with her;
A' joined to Christ, they become one S/spirit with him.

The argument is tight: Both are "bodily" relationships that imply a form of "union," the one with Christ through his resurrection; the other with the prostitute through intercourse. Paul's point, of course, is that the two are mutually exclusive; therefore they must "flee from sexual immorality" (v. 18).

The present assertion (v. 15) flows directly out of the preceding theological formulation (v. 14). Paul argues that their *bodies* (i.e., the bodies of all believers individually) "are members of Christ himself"; therefore the Corinthian believers may not take away from Christ what is united to him and "make them members of a prostitute."305 The word "members" is a term for the parts of the body, thus suggesting in a metaphorical way that the believer is an integral part of the "body" of Christ. This usage, however, moves in a completely different direction from that which will appear much later (12:12–26), where the "body" refers to the church, and the concern is with the relationship of the "members" to one another. Here the concern is with one's relationship to the Lord himself. The body of the believer is for the Lord because through Christ's resurrection God has set in motion the reality of our own resurrection. This means that the believer's physical body is to be understood as "joined" to Christ's own "body" that was raised from the dead.

Paul's thinking here is fluid, but it is not strained. His concern throughout has the double foci of their

view of the body and of *porneia*. He is arguing that the physical body counts; it is for the Lord. The resurrection has absolutely determined that. He is also aware that the seventh commandment has never been abrogated, that sexual immorality is absolutely wrong. Since sexual immorality involves bodily union, Paul gets at the prohibition of the one (sexual immorality) through metaphorical implications from the other (the "parts" of the body). Thus, joined to Christ himself through the resurrection, it is unthinkable ("God forbid!" KJV; NIV, "Never!") that one should "take away" a part of the body of Christ and make it a part of the body of a prostitute.

16–17 With a repetition of the formula "Do you not know that?" Paul proceeds to explain what has just been asserted (v. 15), starting with the sexual union of a man with a prostitute. Since it is unthinkable that one should take away the "limbs" of Christ and make them "limbs" of a prostitute's body, what could have prompted the latter idea in the first place? The answer has to do with the biblical view of sexual intercourse: "He who unites himself with a prostitute311 is one with her in body." How so? "Because it is said,313 'The two will become one flesh.'" While the union of man and wife as "one flesh" implies far more than merely physical union, Paul's concern here is strictly with the physical aspects of the union.316 To have sexual intercourse with a prostitute involves an illicit sexual joining of one's body to that of another (literally). It is not the sexual union itself that is incompatible with union with Christ; it is such a union *with a prostitute*. This constitutes bodily union with a person who is not herself a member of Christ, whose own body therefore is not destined for resurrection.

In a parallel sentence, with "Lord" substituted for "prostitute" and "spirit" for "body," the illicit union is now contrasted to the believer's union with Christ: "But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit." In light of the coming conclusion (vv. 19–20), Paul is almost certainly referring to the work of the Spirit, whereby through the "one Spirit" the believer's "spirit" has been joined indissolubly with Christ. The believer is united to the Lord and thereby has become one S/spirit with him (see on 5:3–4). This does not mean that Paul is now abandoning his concern over the body; what follows (vv. 18–20) makes it clear that he is not. As above (v. 13c) this is another instance where the language has been dictated by its parallel. Since the union to which this is in contrast was constituted through sexual intercourse, he could scarcely describe it in terms of becoming "one body" with the Lord. Even though the concern is still with the physical body of the believer that belongs to the Lord on the basis of his resurrection, the union in this case is of a different kind; the way to express that union is in terms of the Spirit.

Thus Paul's point is singular. It does not have to do with the union of whole persons in sexual relations—which is true in marriage but irrelevant here; nor does it have to do with the "mystical" union of the believer to Christ, and through Christ to his body the church—which is also irrelevant here. Paul's point is that the physical union of a believer with a prostitute is not possible because the believer's body already belongs to the Lord, through whose resurrection one's body has become a "member" of Christ by his Spirit.

18 Up to this point Paul has been arguing against the pneumatics' invalid theological slogans. Inherent in that argument was the prohibition now explicitly stated: "Flee from319 *porneia*." An identical prohibition of idolatry will appear again a bit later (10:14). The express statement made earlier (5:9–11) implies that both of these are matters to which Paul had previously spoken; the present argument and that soon to follow (chaps. 8–10) suggest that some of the Corinthians have taken exception to his former rulings. In both cases he replies first to their theological stance; but also in both cases there can be no wavering on the behavior itself. They must absolutely "flee from sexual immorality."

But prohibition is never Paul's final word. So he offers one further theological reason, closely related to what has already been said. "The body is for the Lord," he had postulated; now he argues that sexual immorality in particular is a sin against one's own body, which is "for the Lord" because it is also a "temple of the Spirit." All of that can be easily discerned; however, the argument is introduced by a notorious crux that is not at all easy.

With a double asyndeton Paul says (lit.): "Flee from sexual immorality. Every sin, whatever it is a man

commits, is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body." Paul's concern is with the final clause, that in sexual immorality a man sins against his own body—which turns out to be his own but not his own. But what did he intend by the preceding clause which set that up? The problems are two: (1) The phrase "*every* sin, whatever it is that a man commits" is especially strong. Taken at face value it would seem to include even sexual immorality, which makes the next clause difficult. Moreover, the statement has long exercised Christians, who see other sins as also "against one's body." (2) That leads one to ask what "outside the body" means, especially since the next clause specifically singles out sexual immorality as being *against* one's own body.

Although Allo had suggested that as many as 20 or 30 solutions have been offered, the viable options may be narrowed to two. The first is to see the first clause as a Corinthian slogan, which Paul then qualifies in the second clause, as earlier (vv. 12–13). This would go something like: "All sin, whatever it is that a man commits, is outside the body," you say (or, you say?). "To the contrary, there is one sin in particular that is against one's own physical body, namely sexual immorality." There are several things in favor of this option: (1) Paul has already argued with positions of theirs in the present context; (2) it has formal similarity with the preceding paragraph (vv. 13–17), where he cites their slogan, then qualifies it and elaborates on the qualification theologically (vv. 13ab/13c–14/15–17 and 18b/18c/19–20); (3) it preserves the unqualified sense of "all sin"; (4) it corresponds to the generic use of *anthropos* ("man") in the slogan that comes next (7:1; cf. 7:26); and (5) it gets Paul off the hook for having made what appears to be a less than precise theological dictum. On this view the sentence would mean: "The body has nothing to do with sin." This is an attractive option, and may well be right. Nonetheless (a) it is an abrupt word to follow the prohibition,326 (b) there are no immediate internal clues to suggest it, and (c) the emphasis on "his *own* body" does not seem to respond to their slogan as such, which emphasizes the noncorporeal nature of all sin.

The second option is to see it as a Pauline construct, formulated in the larger context of the whole passage (vv. 13–20) and especially as a means of setting up by way of contrast the real concern, that "he who sins sexually sins against his own body." In this view the *de* ("but") is exceptive, qualifying "every sin" to mean "every other sin" except the one spoken of in this clause. Paul's urgency, however, is not with "other sins"; rather, he is arguing that "every other sin is apart from the body" in the sense that no other sin is directed specifically toward one's own body in the way that sexual immorality is. How so? The answer lies with what has already been said (vv. 15–17) in light of what he will say about "one's own body" a bit later (7:4). His concern is not with what affects and does not affect the body per se, but with the special character of sexual immorality and how that sin is directed especially against the body as "for the Lord." In fornicating with a prostitute a man removes his body (which is a temple of the Spirit, purchased by God and destined for resurrection) from union with Christ and makes it a member of her body, thereby putting it under her "mastery" (v. 12b; cf. 7:4). Every other sin is apart from (i.e., not "in") the body in this singular sense.

That this moves in the direction of Paul's intent seems verified by the concluding argument that follows (vv. 19–20), which flows directly out of this one. Even though the body is "one's own," it more properly belongs to God, since it is a temple of the Spirit and has been purchased through redemption. Thus the unique nature of sexual sin is not so much that one sins against one's own self but that one sins against one's own body, as *viewed in terms of its place in redemptive history*.

19–20 With yet another "Or do you not know that?" Paul gives theological justification for the preceding prohibition (v. 18a) and its theological explanation (v. 18bc). At the same time the content of this question serves to reinforce and elaborate the theology of the body expressed in the preceding paragraph (vv. 13–17). With the use of two images (temple and purchase of slaves = the Spirit and the cross) he reasserts that the body in its present existence belongs to God. Thus the body is also included in the full redemptive work of Christ—crucifixion, resurrection, and the present work of the Spirit. All of which leads to the final inferential imperative: They must therefore glorify God in their bodies, which of course in this context means no sexual immorality.

The tie to what has immediately preceded is achieved with the conjunction "or" (again omitted from

the NIV as implied by context). "Whoever sins sexually sins against their own body," he has just affirmed, by which he means one's own body as it is "for the Lord." "Or do you not know that your body332 is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God, and that you are not your own?" As in this rendering, the final clause should be included in the question.335 The two parts complement each other. The body is the present habitation of God's Spirit, which means by implication that one belongs to the God whose Spirit dwells within. At the same time the second part results in a shift of metaphors, so that God's proper ownership of the body is affirmed in terms of God's people being "bought at a price." The emphasis, therefore, is especially on the body as "for the Lord" in the sense of its being God's rightful possession, which is evidenced both through the indwelling Spirit and the redemptive work of Christ. This, of course, stands in stark contrast to the pneumatics' view that the body is destined for destruction and therefore has no present or eternal significance.

In referring to the body as the temple of the Spirit, Paul has taken the imagery that properly belongs to the church as a whole (cf. 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21–22) and in this single instance applied it to the individual believer. On the imagery itself, see the earlier discussion (3:16). The use of the possessives reflects something of the difference. The church through the Spirit is *God's* temple in Corinth, in contrast to all the pagan temples and shrines. Through the phenomenon of the indwelling Spirit, Paul now images the body as the *Spirit's* temple, emphasizing that it is the "place" of the Spirit's dwelling in the individual believers' lives. In the same way that the temple in Jerusalem "housed" the presence of the living God, so the Spirit of God is "housed" in the believer's body. This is imagery pure and simple, in which the significance of the body for the present is being affirmed. It is thus not intended to be a statement of Christian anthropology, as though the body were the mere external casing of the spirit or Spirit; but neither is it intended to make too much of the body, so that "body beautiful" is somehow translated into a Christian value per se. The body simply is, thus is an essential part of the created order; and therefore in keeping with everything else in Paul, as gift the body is neither to be adored nor abused, but it is to be honored as part of God's good creation.

In the present case the Spirit's indwelling is the presupposition of the imagery, reinforced here by the two modifiers, "who is in you" and "whom you have received338 from God." What Paul seems to be doing is taking over their own theological starting point, namely that they are "spiritual" because they have the Spirit, and, probably to their dismay, is redirecting it to include the sanctity of the body. The reality of the indwelling Spirit is now turned against them. They thought the presence of the Spirit meant a negation of the body; Paul argues the exact opposite: The presence of the Spirit in their present bodily existence is God's affirmation of the body.

Paul moves easily from the fact that the Spirit is "from God" to his final point: Do you not know that the presence of God's Spirit in you means that "you are not you own," that is, that your bodies are not your own to do with as you wish in the matter of sexuality? This is the final punctuation of the original affirmation that the "body is for the Lord." As evidence for this final assertion, Paul shifts metaphors once more, this time to the slave market, imagery to which he will later return in the concrete situation of the slave (7:22). That passage makes it clear that the imagery here is that of slavery; the verb "bought" with its accompanying genitive of quantity, "at a price," places it squarely in the slave market. In contrast to the use of this metaphor elsewhere in the NT, where redemption for freedom is in view (e.g., Gal. 3:13; 4:5; Rev. 5:9; 14:3), this passage images their new position as "slaves" of God, bought with a price to do his will. Although some have argued otherwise,343 the related usage in Galatians and especially the liturgical passage in the Apocalypse (Rev. 5:9) indicate that Paul has the cross in view, whereby at the "cost" of his life ("by your blood," Rev. 5:9) Christ purchased us for God. His point here is that even the body is included in that purchase. Thus at the end of the argument he joins the cross to the resurrection, along with the present gift of the Spirit, as evidence that the "body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body."

The final imperative flows directly out of the argument from the two preceding images. The body is the shrine of the indwelling Spirit and is therefore not one's own but God's, who purchased it through the work of the cross. "Therefore honor345 God with your bodies." At the same time, it serves to

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bring the entire argument to its conclusion. This is the positive side of the preceding imperative: "Flee from sexual immorality" (v. 18a). Because the body is God's, one must *not* use it in illicit intercourse; instead, one must make it a chaste temple whereby to honor God.

Two points from this passage need to be emphasized in the contemporary church. First, in most Western cultures, where sexual mores have blatantly moved toward pagan standards, the doctrine of the sanctity of the body needs to be heard anew within the church. Sexual immorality is still sin, even though it has been justified under every conceivable rationalization. Those who take Scripture seriously are not prudes or legalists at this point; rather, they recognize that God has purchased us for higher things. Our bodies belong to God through the redemption of the cross; and they are destined for resurrection. Part of the reason why Christians flee sexual immorality is that their bodies are for the Lord, who is to be honored in the deeds of the body as well as in all other behavior and attitudes.

Second, this passage needs to be heard again and again over against every encroachment of Hellenistic dualism that would negate the body in favor of the soul. God made us whole people; and in Christ he has redeemed us wholly. In the Christian view there is no dichotomy between body and spirit that either indulges the body because it is irrelevant or punishes it so as to purify the spirit. This pagan view of physical existence finds its way into Christian theology in a number of subtle ways, including the penchant on the part of some to "save souls" while caring little for people's material needs. The Christian creed, based on NT revelation, is not the immortality of the soul, but the resurrection of the body. That creed does not lead to crass materialism; rather, it affirms a holistic view of redemption that is predicated in part on the doctrine of creation—both the physical and spiritual orders are good because God created them—and in part on the doctrine of redemption, including the consummation—the whole fallen order, including the body, has been redeemed in Christ and awaits its final redemption.[3]

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Mark A. Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, New American Commentary
Gordon Fee, *1 Corinthians*, New International Commentary of the New Testament (NICNT)
Anthony Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (NIGTC)
Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary
Alan F. Johnson, *1 Corinthians*, IVP New Testament Commentary
David Prior, *The Message of 1 Corinthians*, The Bible Speaks Today
William Baker, *1 Corinthians*, Cornerstone Bible Commentary
Paul Ellingwroth and Howard A. Hatton, *A Handbook on 1 Corinthians*, UBSH

[3] Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse et al., Revised Edition, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 278–294.