

FIRST CORINTHIANS

Chapter 6

Lawsuits Among Believers

If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? ² Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? ³ Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! ⁴ Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church! ⁵ I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? ⁶ But instead, one brother goes to law against another—and this in front of unbelievers! ⁷ The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? ⁸ Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers. ⁹ Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders ¹⁰ nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

In this new chapter, the apostle may seem to move abruptly to a completely new topic. On closer inspection, however, one finds an intimate connection between the Corinthians' refusal to take action in the case of the immoral man (chapter 5) and their litigation before pagan courts. What links the two cases is a supine attitude, an acceptance of and participation in the world's way, an unwillingness to condemn and restrain their own sin, to die to self, and thus to go the way of the cross, a failure to exercise church discipline and spiritual judgment in matters tearing their community apart. A key verb in Paul's treatment of both cases is κρίνω ("to judge," 5:3, 12–13; 6:1, 2, 3, 6). More specifically, we see that 5:12b("Isn't it for you to judge those on the inside?") leads directly into the issue addressed in 6:1–8, the need for the Corinthians themselves to judge among brothers with regard to everyday matters and to avoid public lawsuits, which sully the name of Christ. (CC)

A Talmudic dictum forbade the Jewish people from going to law with one another in pagan courts. Rabbi Tarfon was quoted as saying this: "In any place where you find heathen law courts, even though their law is the same as the Israelite law, you must not resort to them." Paul expected no less from Christian people. When Christians washed their dirty linen in public, they made the church a laughingstock. The world was likely to respond sarcastically, "See how they love one another!" (CC)

6:1 *a dispute with another.* Paul seems to be talking about various kinds of property court cases here (cf. the phrase “rather be cheated,” v. 7), not criminal cases that should be handled by the state (Ro 13:3–4). (CSB)

A legal complaint that requires redress. (TLSB)

Dare. We should not diminish the forcefulness of the verb *τολμᾷ* (“dare”) with which Paul introduces his argument. The first three Greek words have their closest natural English equivalent in the exclamation “How dare you!” Paul is not merely frowning on the practice of Christians pursuing lawsuits against one another; with the full weight of his apostolic authority he is expressing his outrage. Attempts to blunt his injunction are influenced by human motives and the cultural milieu rather than respect for the Word of God. (CC)

before the saints. The Corinthians should take their property cases before qualified Christians for settlement. In Paul’s day the Romans allowed the Jews to apply their own law in property matters, and since the Romans did not yet consider Christians as a separate class from the Jews, Christians no doubt had the same rights. (CSB)

Within the Body of Christ is the option of forgiveness and reconciliation. (TLSB)

Greed, one of the sins denounced in 5:11, seems to have been the main factor in the Corinthians’ lawsuits (cf. 6:7–8). Recent studies of the Roman Empire’s legal system have shown that most civil cases were brought by the wealthy against those of lesser means. Because of their social status, the well-to-do could usually count on the judges’ support against the “have nots.” It is likely, then, that the wealthier members of the congregation were still affected by this cultural tendency to self-serving litigiousness, and were exercising their legal clout at the expense of poorer members. If this analysis is correct, then the way the rich despised the poor at the congregation’s communal meals presents a parallel situation (1 Cor 11:22). Paul does not say how many lawsuits may have already fractured the church. (CC)

unrighteous. Earlier, Paul contrasted the worldly and spiritual realms (2:14–16; 5:10). Worldly people presided and juried at the secular courts. (TLSB)

6:2 *do you not know.* For the first of six times in this chapter (6:2; also 6:3, 9, 15, 16, 19), Paul asks them, “Don’t you know?” His aim is to put them to shame (6:5) and thus bring them to their senses. A church so gifted with knowledge (1:5) should know better! Have the Corinthians forgotten that, just as the saints will sit on Christ’s throne and reign with him as kings, so they shall sit with him as judges of the world?¹⁶ This affirmation, observes one commentator, “is an extension of the promise made to the Apostles (Matt. xix. 28, Luke xxii. 30)” that they will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.^a Following the rabbinic exegetical principle *קל וְחִמְרָא* (“light and heavy”), Paul argues that if the saints are to be entrusted with that weighty responsibility, surely they can handle a far lighter task. Again we see the apostle’s high regard for the church in Corinth—for all their aberrations, they are still God’s “called saints” (1:2). As such, they need a long-range view of what that means; they need to see their calling in eschatological perspective, with all the responsibility that will entail. By comparison with the judicial task awaiting them on the Last Day, these cases in Corinth are “trivial” (5:2). (CC)

saints will judge the world. With Christ. Cf. Mt 19:28; 2Ti 2:12; Rev 20:4. (CSB)

Cf 2:15. Jesus promised that He would enthrone us with Him to participate in the judgment. (TLSB)

κρίνεται—“The present tense denotes the certainty of the event.” This eschatological judgment is already underway as Christians proclaim the Gospel, which dethrones worldly wisdom and the ruler of this age. (CC)

not competent. ἀνάξιοι—This adjective could mean “not competent” or “unworthy” (BAGD). The reason why the Corinthians bring their disputes before unbelieving judges probably is not a lack of legal expertise, but a failure to assign their reputation, and the reputation of the Gospel of Christ, a higher priority than their own petty agendas. In that way they act “unworthy” to judge the world. (CC)

competent to judge trivial cases. Paul views believers as fully competent to judge cases where Christians have claims against each other, because they view matters from a godly vantage point. In comparison with their future role in the judgment of the world and of angels, judgments concerning things of this life are insignificant. (CSB)

This is a minor responsibility but a significant test of fellowship and unity. (TLSB)

6:3 *we will judge angels.* Cf. 2Pe 2:4, 9; Jude 6. (CSB)

Cf Jude 6; 2Pt 2:4. God’s faithful people, though inferior in power, will nevertheless judge Satan and the wicked angels. (TLSB)

The sting in Paul’s argument becomes even more perceptible as he repeats the word βιωτικά (“things of this life”) at the beginning of 6:4 in the if-clause (the protasis) for emphasis: “Disputes about the things of this life, then, if you have ...” As citizens of heaven (Phil 3:20), the minds of the saints should be set on heavenly things, not worldly cares (βιωτικά). Such civil suits should not arise among God’s people. (TLSB)

On that day, Paul continues, all of us will participate with God in judging the angels (5:3). Fallen angels will be condemned (2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6), while holy angels will continue in their service. As those whom the exalted Christ calls his “brothers,” God’s children are superior to angels, who are “ministering spirits sent to serve” the heirs of salvation (Ps 8:5; Heb 1:14; 2:5–11). Reasoning once more from the greater to the less, Paul concludes that Christians, who hold such an exalted rank, surely are worthy and competent to handle “things of this life” (βιωτικά, 1 Cor 6:3). (CC)

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6:4 Paul rebukes the embarrassing exposure of the congregation’s weakness and inability to manage conflict. (TLSB)

even men of little account. See NIV text note. Either the verse suggests that the least in the church are capable of judging such small matters, or it asks ironically if believers should submit their cases to pagan judges, who really are not qualified to decide on cases between Christians. (CSB)

In 1:28, God’s elect were “despised” in the eyes of the world. Paul uses the same Gk word here to describe the status of unbelievers (v 6) with respect to God’s chosen ones. (TLSB)

τοὺς ἐξουθενημένους—Literally, “those despised, of no account” in the church, i.e., the “unrighteous people” (1 Cor 6:1), “unbelievers” (6:6). God chose for his church those people who were despised by the world. (CC)

But what should Christians do when they cannot agree about worldly matters? The meaning of the then-clause (the apodosis) in 6:4 is much debated. Is the final verb καθίζετε to be understood as an imperative? (Cf. NIV: “Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges [καθίζετε] even men of little account in the church!”) If so, then the verb’s object, “those with no standing in the church,” would refer to those “inside” (5:12), church members of lowly status. In other words, Paul would be telling the Corinthians that even their most insignificant members could handle such trivial cases; therefore they should appoint such people to the task. But there are several problems with this interpretation. The chief difficulty is that it is doubtful Paul would ever call any church members “despised” or “those with no standing in the church” (6:4). It is also unusual to find a Greek imperative at the end of a sentence. (CC)

The second clause in 6:4 is best understood as a question : “Do you entrust jurisdiction to people with no standing in the church?” In favor of taking it as a question is, first of all, the context. That, precisely, has been the apostle’s concern—that they should not take their cases before outsiders (6:1; cf. “outside” in 5:12–13). It has been argued that to call non-Christian judges “of no standing in the church” is “a strong phrase to apply to the heathen without any further explanation.” But Paul’s intention is not to belittle non-Christians in high offices. In other contexts he insists that Christians pay all authorities (heathen or Christian) their proper honor in matters that lie under their jurisdiction (Rom 13:1–7; cf. 1 Pet 2:13–17). His point here is that “whatever their [the heathen judges’] social standing in the world, in the church their honored position is worth nothing.” They cannot be called on to settle disputes between believers, within the body of Christ, which is God’s holy temple (1 Cor 3:16–17). (CC)

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6:5 *shame*. Guilt worked by God’s Law. (TLSB)

Then in 6:5, in contrast to his more gentle tone in 4:14, Paul declares that he is deliberately setting out to put them to shame (cf. 15:34). Is he to draw the conclusion that among this large congregation, so richly endowed with wisdom and knowledge and so proud of its gifts, there is not one person wise enough to arbitrate a property dispute between Christian brothers? Divine wisdom and knowledge was the topic of 1:5, 18–25; 2:6–7; 3:18–23. The use of the word “brother,” both in 6:5 and in 6:6, is highly pointed. It is completely antithetical to the meaning of Christian brotherhood that members of the church fight over earthly property and other legal matters. (CC)

It is unclear whether one should understand 6:5 as an exclamatory statement or another question. Either way, it makes little difference to the sense. Paul is horrified at what is happening. Instead of airing their dirty linen “before unbelievers” (6:6; “the unrighteous people,” 6:1), Christians must make every effort to maintain a good reputation and not cause offense to Christ, whose name they bear. (CC)

6:6 *brother with brother* – ἀδελφὸς μετὰ ἀδελφοῦ—In the interests of inclusiveness, NRSV renders this phrase as “a believer ... against a believer” and REB “Christian ... with Christian.” However, those translations miss the familial force of “brother.” Members of the same family—brothers and sisters in Christ—should be able to settle their differences among themselves without tarnishing the family name by making their disputes public. (TLSB)

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before unbelievers? Cf v 4. (TLSB)

6:7 *completely defeated*. Most likely by greed, retaliation and hatred, instead of practicing unselfishness, forgiveness and love—even willingness to suffer loss. (CSB)

One enters into a lawsuit with a view to winning. There are no winners when the congregation is shamed. (TLSB)

Now, Paul continues (6:7), the fact that you have any lawsuits among you at all is a sign that your sinful passions have utterly gotten the better of you. That in itself would serve to indict you, even if you did not go the extra step and bring your cases before pagan judges. Then, with two sharp questions, the apostle cuts off all possible protests. It is futile to argue, “But you don’t know what he did to me” or “Just imagine the consequences if we allowed him to get away with this.” Any such protests arise from a lack of faith that God can and will set things right in his own good time. He does not need our court cases to bring about justice. (CC)

But more important, such behavior demonstrates a failure to live according to the “grace” and “peace” God has shown us in Christ (1:3). Thus Paul reminds the Corinthians of the way of the cross, challenging them to endure mistreatment uncomplainingly in keeping with the Lord’s

Sermon on the Mount: “Don’t resist one who is evil. ... Turn the other cheek” (Mt 5:38–40). The Christian way of meekness which Jesus and Paul set forth is the opposite of all human self-assertion. We see Jesus’ influence on Paul’s teaching in this regard also in Rom 12:17; 1 Cor 4:12–17; 1 Thess 5:15. (CC)

suffer wrong? ... defrauded? Enduring wrong is more victorious than to put a fellow believer under worldly authority. (TLSB)

6:8 *you yourselves wrong*. Paul acknowledges the Corinthians’ lack of moral superiority. (TLSB)

Rather than following their Lord and his apostle (1 Cor 4:12–13) in the way of suffering, the Corinthians actually inflict suffering on others, even their Christian brothers (6:8). Paul is not saying it is all right to inflict suffering on non-Christians. His point is that while they are supposed to do good to all people, honor all, and live at peace with all (cf. Rom 12:18; 1 Pet 2:17), they have special obligations to fellow members of the household of faith (Gal 6:10). It strikes Paul as incredible that it is especially their brothers in the faith who are suffering mistreatment at their hands. Their attacks on one another contradict the fellowship in Christ into which they were called (1 Cor 1:9). (CC)

The principle Paul will later affirm regarding meat sacrificed to idols applies equally to lawsuits: “By your knowledge, the weak person, the brother for whom Christ died, is being destroyed. So by sinning against your brothers and striking their weak conscience, *you are sinning against Christ*. Therefore, if food [one could also say ‘a lawsuit’] causes my brother to fall, I will never eat meat to eternity, lest I cause my brother to fall” (8:11–13; see also 10:32–33). (TLSB)

Paul’s sharp denunciation of Christians who take one another to court may lead us to ask whether secular courts are to be totally shunned by the Christian. To this the apostle would certainly answer no. On a number of occasions Paul himself appealed to Roman law to come to his defense and the defense of the Christian “way” (Acts 9:2) in the face of unjust treatment at the hands of non-Christians (Acts 16:37; 22:25; 25:11). He regarded the Roman authorities as “ordained of God” and accountable to God (Rom 13:1); thus it was incumbent upon Christians to obey them and proper for him to appeal to them. The NT never suggests that the offices of the civil ruler, the magistrate, the tax official, or the soldier are in themselves displeasing to God. Thus the Christian may properly serve in these offices. (CC)

The Christian and Courts of Law

Under what circumstances, then, may a Christian or a congregation resort to the civil court? Here the first questions to be asked may be these: Who are the parties involved? Is it a case of Christian brothers going to law against one another instead of letting the problem be solved by a competent person within the church? Is it a quest for revenge instead of forgiving the brother? Or is it a case of a Christian or a church, in their capacity as responsible citizens, taking a case to court out of concern for the neighbor? Much depends on the cause and the motive. Is the purpose to harm and defraud one’s neighbor, to “get back at him”? Or does the plaintiff bring his suit with no selfish motives, but simply in order to defend the church and her mission against attacks from those outside the church, or to protect others and promote the welfare of society? In his exposition of the Sermon on the Mount, Luther has a nice balance:

Now, if someone asks whether a Christian may go to court or defend himself, the answer is simply no. A Christian is the kind of person who has nothing to do with this sort of secular existence and law. He belongs to a kingdom or realm where the only regulation should be the prayer (Matt. 6:12): “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.” Here only mutual love and service should prevail. (CC)

On the other hand, Luther adds that for the sake of one’s neighbor, one’s obligations to “some other person,” a Christian may serve as a judge, and use a law court in order “to defend, guard, and protect.” Luther continues, “Thus you are not forbidden to go to court and lodge a complaint against injustice or violence, just so long as you do not have a false heart, but one that remains as patient as it was before, one that is doing this only to maintain the right and to avoid the wrong, out of a genuine love for righteousness.” (CC)

Thus Luther upheld the Sermon on the Mount’s injunction to the Christian to turn the other cheek and bear the world’s hatred patiently. At the same time, he rejected the Anabaptist view that civil government was of the devil and could under no circumstances be used by the Christian. In keeping with Luther’s balanced view, it is proper for Christians to serve as judges or lawyers, and it is proper, under some circumstances, for Christians to bring a lawsuit. Examples would be when a church presents a brief as a “friend of the court” in order to forbid abortion or support similar initiatives which promote human welfare and the sanctity of human life, or when a Christian or church appeals to a court to seek protection from violence or criminal acts, or to defend the right to proclaim the Gospel or lead a Christian life. (CC)

But it is never proper for a Christian or a church to take fellow Christians or church leaders to a secular court, or to do anything which arises out of selfish motives or ecclesiastical divisions (1:10–17). The church should never wash its dirty linen in public. The proper place for hearing such disputes is before an ecclesiastical judge—someone within the Christian community who is “wise” (σοφός, 6:5). (CC)

As Fee observes, our litigious culture has great difficulty “hearing” this text. “Our priorities,” he continues, “tend to be warped toward the values of this age rather than of the age to come. Here we have great need of deep reformation. Most legal actions on the part of Christians are predicated on ‘rights’ and ‘the pursuit of property’ in the present age. Until our thinking is genuinely overhauled on these matters, our approach to the text will be supine neglect, circuitous exegesis.” (CC)

6:9 Despite the paragraph break after 6:8 in NA²⁷ and most versions, we should not overlook the close link between 6:1–8 and what follows. Note the particle ἢ (“or”) which serves as a link between the paragraphs: “Or don’t you know . . . ?” The apostle has just been rebuking the Corinthians for bringing lawsuits against brother Christians before “unrighteous” judges (ἀδίκων, 6:1) and for their injustice toward their brothers (6:8). It would be better for them to suffer unrighteous treatment (ἀδικεῖσθε, 6:7) than to inflict it upon others. Now he warns: “Or don’t you know that unrighteous people will not inherit God’s kingdom?” (6:9). (CC)

not inherit the kingdom of God. Cf. Jn 3:3–5.(CSB) (TLSB)

Paul lists habitual sins, which imply a life choice incompatible with the holiness of God's kingdom. (TLSB)

The word ἄδικοι is a broad, general term meaning “unjust, unrighteous, wicked people.” It is a synonym of “unbeliever(s)” (ἄπιστος, 6:6; also 7:12–15; 10:27; 14:22–24) and an antonym of a “brother” Christian (ἀδελφός, 6:5, 6, 8). The unrighteous lack faith in Christ and thus stand outside God's covenant relationship with his people. Unrighteous people are characterized by “unrighteousness” (ἀδικία, Rom 1:18, 29) and do not know the grace of God. Their wickedness manifests itself in the lifestyles listed in 1 Cor 6:9b–10. The righteous person (δίκαιος, Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11), on the other hand, stands in the right relationship with God through faith in Christ. Only the righteous have fellowship with the righteous God and inherit his kingdom. By placing ἄδικοι, “unrighteous people,” immediately before θεοῦ, “God's” (6:9), Paul highlights the incongruity of the idea that unrighteous people could inherit God's kingdom. (CC)

This is not the only place where Paul categorically denies that wicked people will inherit eternal life. Similar stern warnings are found in Eph 5:5 and Gal 5:21. (CC)

An inheritance is conferred by a father on his children. “If we are children, then we are heirs” (Rom 8:17). Children receive their inheritance simply by virtue of their birth into the father's household. According to the NT, those who are born again by water and the Spirit (Jn 3:5) can look forward to an “imperishable and undefiled and unfading” inheritance in heaven (1 Pet 1:4; cf. Titus 3:7). But this inheritance is conferred on those who are righteous through faith (Rom 4:13). Those who wantonly persist in wicked behavior testify that they are not God's children; they have no claim to the heavenly inheritance. (CC)

Do not be deceived – μὴ πλανᾶσθε—“Stop deceiving yourselves” brings out the force of the *present* imperative, which prohibits action already happening. The verb's voice could be either middle (“deceiving yourselves”) or passive (“being deceived”). It makes little difference. In either case, the apostle's word is God's Word, which has the power to stop the deception. (CC p. 196)

Paul appeals to the Corinthians: “Stop deceiving yourselves!” (6:9). Congregational members living in wickedness should not think that “God will forgive me, that's his business!” Writing in a similar vein to the Galatians, Paul warns, “Stop deceiving yourselves! [μὴ πλανᾶσθε]. God is not mocked. Whatever a person sows, this he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life” (Gal 6:7–8). We may also compare Paul's use of μὴ πλανᾶσθε, “Stop deceiving yourselves!” in a similar context in 1 Cor 15:33, where he warns the congregation of the damage done by associating with evildoers: “evil associations corrupt good habits.” If the Corinthians persist in playing with fire, they will be burned! Again Paul is reminding them of the need for a proper eschatological perspective. Christians must exercise judgment and discernment *now* regarding their own behavior and that of brother Christians, because God's judgment is coming (6:1–8; cf. also 11:27–32). (CC)

The apostle proceeds to spell out categories of “unrighteous people” (6:9) who will not inherit the kingdom. Six of these he already mentioned in 5:10–11; now he will add four more. In

chapter 5, he warned the Corinthians not to have fellowship with anyone who calls himself a “brother” (Christian) but who is sexually immoral or who has fallen into other gross sins (5:9–11). The present chapter opened with some sharp words regarding the unsuitability of the unrighteous to hear lawsuits between Christians, and a reminder that one day the tables will be turned, with the saints sitting in judgment on the whole world, including unrighteous judges (6:1–2). Whereas the Corinthians have been blurring the distinction between the righteous and the wicked (cf. Mal 3:18), Paul calls on them to keep things straight. Now he depicts the gulf between God’s kingdom and people who practice various forms of unrighteousness. (CC)

The first two categories on Paul’s list (the “sexually immoral” and the “idolaters”) are the same as in 5:11. His reason for placing idolatry in the midst of various sexual sins may be that “idolatry often was a source of sexual perversion.” Also, immorality defies personal pleasure above obedience to the true God. The third category, μοιχοί, “adulterers,” needs no explanation beyond that given by the Lord himself (Mt 5:27–32). Two more sexual offenders follow, “catamites” and “sodomites,” reflecting another vice common in the Greco-Roman world, a vice for which the Greeks were especially notorious. Paul’s comments specify the passive and active partners (respectively) in acts of male homosexuality. In his epistle to the Romans Paul includes lesbianism with male homosexuality as perversions which subject those who practice them to the wrath of God. (CC)

Sadly, the church today needs to be reminded of the obvious implications. In light of the apostle’s warning that practicing homosexuals will not inherit the kingdom, it is obvious that they must not be ordained in the church of God. They are to be treated as unbelievers, who need to be brought to repentance and Christian faith (Mt 18:17), in the same way that the church reaches out with Law and Gospel to those in bondage to other forms of sexual immorality, to idolaters, and to the others on Paul’s list. (CC)

It is significant that Paul emphasizes sexual sins as prime examples of unrighteousness. In 6:18 he will state why: sexual sins are especially serious because they are sins committed with and against one’s own body. Within the category of sexual sins, Paul singles out homosexuality as a gross perversion of the sexual function God originally created as pure and holy (“very good,” Gen 1:27–28, 31) to be enjoyed within marriage. Paul includes two words here for the two homosexual roles (1 Cor 6:9). In Rom 1:26–27 he selects homosexuality and lesbianism as the ultimate examples of reprobate humans rebelling against God. In Romans 1 and 1 Cor 5:9–11 and 6:9–11 there is a close connection between sexual immorality and idolatry. The church is to be the pure virgin bride of Christ (e.g., Eph 5:22–31; Rev 21:2). Sexual immorality and spiritual apostasy go together (e.g., Jeremiah 2–4; Ezekiel 16; 18; Hosea). Sexual immorality is a kind of idolatry. A person cannot engage in sexual sins and remain part of the body of Christ (see also, e.g., Rev 21:8, 27; 22:15). (CC)

Paul now turns from sexual sins to list an assortment of aberrations that pertain to property and to physical and verbal abuse. Of the five categories listed in 6:10, the only new one is κλέπται (“thieves”), a word which covers all kinds of theft and exploitation. The others were listed in 5:10–11. (CC)

None of these persons, Paul reiterates, will inherit God’s kingdom. The repetition of that fact in both 6:9 and 6:10 serves to underline the gravity of the issue. These sins cannot be condoned or ignored by the church. Those who habitually practice them will not be saved. (CC)

It should be noted that Paul does not mean that a person who has at some time or another fallen into any of these sins will never inherit the kingdom. Scripture depicts murderers, prostitutes, adulterers, and thieves who repented and who did enter God’s kingdom, and Paul considers himself to be in that category (1 Tim 1:13–16). What the apostle is stating—and that with great emphasis—is that persistence in such practices is rebellion against God and a rejection of God’s kingdom. It signals a wrong relationship with God, which spurns his grace and so debars a person from eternal life. (CC)

sexually immoral. Paul here identifies three kinds of sexually immoral persons: adulterers, male prostitutes and males who practice homosexuality. In Ro 1:26 he adds the category of females who practice homosexuality. People who engage in such practices, as well as the other offenders listed in vv. 9–10, are explicitly excluded from God’s kingdom (but see next note). (CSB)

Those perishing (1:18). (TLSB)

Homosexual offenders – ἀρσενοκοῖται—Literally ἀρσενοκοίτης means “one who has intercourse [κοίτη] with a male [ἄρσεν].” ἀρσενοκοῖται are the dominant homosexuals, “men who initiate homosexual practices.” Cf. Rom 1:27; 1 Tim 1:10. BAGD gives the definition “a male who practices homosexuality, pederast, sodomite.” (CC p.196)

Homosexuality and Biblical Teaching

In discussing the biblical and Pauline attitude toward homosexuality, it will be helpful to distinguish between homosexual desires or inclinations, and homosexual practice or behavior. That a person may sometimes be overtaken by homosexual thoughts does not justify indulging those thoughts and acting on them. By way of comparison, we may consider the more common human propensity toward adulterous desires. These desires are condemned by Jesus as sinful in themselves (Mt 5:28). But to indulge them to the point of physical adultery involves the person in far more serious spiritual bondage and social damage, both to himself (“the one fornicating sins against his own body,” 1 Cor 6:18) and to others. The biblical condemnations of homosexuality focus their spotlight on indulgence in homosexual *behavior*. (CC p. 204)

Luther made this distinction:

To feel temptation, therefore, is quite a different thing from consenting and yielding to it. We must all feel it, though not all to the same degree; some have more frequent and severe temptations than others. Youth, for example, are tempted chiefly by the flesh; older people are tempted by the world. Others, who are concerned with spiritual matters (that is, strong Christians) are tempted by the devil. But we cannot be harmed by the mere feeling of temptation as long as it is contrary to our will and we would prefer to be rid of it. If we do not feel it, it could not be called a temptation. But to consent to it is to give it free rein and neither resist it nor pray for help against it. (CC p. 204)

After quoting Luther, *A Plan for Ministry* continues: “This distinction between temptation and acting on that temptation is important to make clear, because the mere feeling of homosexual temptation often leads the person to despair.” (CC p. 204)

From beginning to end the Bible condemns the practice of homosexuality as an unnatural perversion. The Creator’s original design for human sexual relations, a design affirmed by Jesus and the apostles, is the union of one male and one female in lifelong marriage (Gen 1:26–28; 2:18–25; Mt 19:1–9; Eph 5:22–33). When the men of Sodom and Gomorrah perverted that design, committing “grievous sin” (Gen 18:20), eventually divine judgment in the form of sulfur and fire fell on them from heaven (Gen 19:24–29). The nature of that sin becomes evident when the men of Sodom, young and old, surround Lot’s house and demand, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we may know them” (Gen 19:5). From that time on, the name “Sodom” became a byword⁶ for practices which were an abomination in God’s sight and called for similar divine judgments. (Deut 29:23 (MT 29:22); 32:32; Is 1:9–10; 3:9; 13:19; Jer 23:14; 49:18; 50:40; Lam 4:6; Ezek 16:46–56; Amos 4:11; Zeph 2:9; Mt 10:15; 11:23–24; Lk 17:29; 2 Pet 2:6; Jude 7; Rev 11:8) (CC pp. 204-205)

In Israel, the Mosaic Law decreed about “a man who lies with a male as one would lie with a woman” that “the two of them have committed an abomination” (תוֹעֵבָה, Lev 20:13). Both men were to be put to death (Lev 20:13). Lev 18:22 also calls homosexuality an “abomination” (תוֹעֵבָה). Thus homosexuality takes its place alongside other capital offenses like murder, sacrificing a child to Molech, consulting a medium, cursing a parent, incest, bestiality, and adultery (Lev 20:1–27). The Israelites were to be a unique and holy people, who refused to follow the practices of their Canaanite environment (Lev 20:22–24). Should they fail to heed the divine warnings, the land would “vomit” them out (Lev 20:22). (CC p. 205)

When the men of the Benjamite city Gibeah degenerated to the point of repeating Sodom’s sin, the other eleven tribes carried out the Lord’s judgment (Judges 19–20). Narrated toward the end of the book of Judges, the episode represents the darkest period of Israel’s Dark Ages—the chaotic period when “there was no king in Israel; each person did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg 21:25). Like the names “Sodom” and “Gomorrah,” “Gibeah” became a byword for degeneracy (Hos 9:9; 10:9). (CC p. 205)

The NT’s testimony against homosexual practice is fully consonant with that of the OT. In Romans 1, Paul condemns homosexual practice as the prime example of the “ungodliness” and “unrighteousness” (Rom 1:18) which call down God’s anger from heaven (Rom 1:18–27). Lesbianism is listed first as an especially egregious and unnatural offense (Rom 1:26), followed by male homosexuality, which the apostle excoriates as an unnatural forsaking of the natural use of the female and a shameful perversion for which the males receive their due penalty (Rom 1:27). See the commentary on 1 Cor 6:9–10 regarding Paul’s warning that practicing homosexuals will not inherit God’s kingdom. (CC pp. 205-206)

The emphasis in 1 Cor 6:9–10 (and also in Rom 1:18–32 and similar passages) is on the practices and actual deeds that are part of a person’s way of life. Therefore, the passage is best interpreted as referring to *practicing* homosexuals, *practicing* adulterers, and so on, rather than to all persons who have immoral *thoughts*—which would include *all* people! Rom 8:13 supports this

interpretation: “If you live according to the flesh, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” The Christian has sinful desires, as does the non-Christian. But the Christian is called to kill those desires by the power of the Spirit; that is, with God’s help he must not actually carry out those desires. Instead, he is to confess them and be absolved from them. (CC pp. 206-207)

If a person succumbs to the desires of the sinful flesh and commits a homosexual sin (or any of the other sinful behaviors listed in 1 Cor 6:9–10), forgiveness is available in Christ: “If we confess our sins, he [God] is faithful and righteous and will forgive to us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn 1:9). But God’s offer of forgiveness in Christ must never be twisted into a license to sin or to excuse the sin of others (cf. Rom 6:1–2). Nor may it be allowed to rob the scriptural word of its force: those who do such things will not “inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor 6:9–10). (CC p. 207)

This even balance of Law and Gospel is found in the policy statement “Guidelines for Ecclesiastical Supervisors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in Addressing Instances of Homosexuality in the Lives of Professional Church Workers”:

The Scriptures’ condemnation of homophile behavior is not meant to deprive those guilty of such sins the help which God would extend to them. While not minimizing the threat of God’s wrath against all forms of enslavement to sin, the church needs to recognize in its efforts to help the homosexual that all people are born in need of deliverance from the effects which sin has imposed on their lives. ...

As a sinful human being the homosexual is held accountable to God for homosexual thoughts, words, and deeds. Such a person should be counseled to heed the church’s call to repentance, trust in God’s promise of deliverance (Ps. 50:15), and order his/her life in accord with the Creator’s intent. (CC p. 207)

Eph 5:5 has a similar list of persons who have no inheritance in God’s kingdom, including the “sexually immoral person” (πόρνος) and the “unclean person” (ἀκάθαρτος); both terms apply to the homosexual. 1 Tim 1:10 lists male homosexuals (ἀρσενικοίτης, the second term for male homosexuals in 1 Cor 6:9) among the “ungodly people and sinners” (1 Tim 1:9) against whom God’s Law is directed, and who are also opposed to the “salutary doctrine” of “the Gospel of glory of the blessed God” (1 Tim 1:10–11). Significantly, Paul says there that homosexuals (and other “sinners,” 1 Tim 1:9) are antithetical (ἀντίκειμαι, 1 Tim 1:10) to the very “Gospel” itself (εὐαγγέλιον, 1 Tim 1:11), not just to God’s “Law” (νόμος, 1 Tim 1:8–9). (CC p. 207)

Finally, in a manner consistent with 1 Cor 6:9–10, there are two passages in the last book of the Bible which apparently include homosexuals among those excluded from the holy city and condemned for eternity to the lake of fire. The first passage, Rev 21:8, lists those who are “detestable” (ἐβδελυγμένοις; NKJV: “abominable”; RSV: “the polluted”; REB: “the obscene”; GNB: “perverts”). That word (the participle of the verb βδελύσσομαι) is a cognate of βδέλυγμα, “a detested thing,” which is applied specifically to homosexuality in LXX Lev 18:22 and Lev 20:13, and which is also applied more generally in the LXX to other forms of perverted behavior (CC pp. 207-208)

The other passage, Rev 22:15, places “the dogs” (οἱ κύνες; REB: “the perverts”) at the head of the list of people “outside” the heavenly city. Dogs were generally despised in Israel.¹⁴ In Deut 23:17–18 (MT Deut 23:18–19) God commands, “There shall not be a female sacral prostitute from the daughters of Israel, and there shall not be a male sacral prostitute from the sons of Israel. You shall not bring a female prostitute’s price, or the hire of a dog, into the house of the Lord your God for any vow, because indeed both of them are an abomination to the Lord.” In those verses, the persons described stand in Hebrew parallelism: the “female sacral prostitute” (הַשְׂדֵּיָה, MT Deut 23:18) is the same person as the “female prostitute” (הַזְּנָה, MT Deut 23:19), and the “male sacral prostitute” (שְׂדֵּיָה, MT Deut 23:18) is the same person described as the “dog” (כְּלָב, MT Deut 23:19). (CC p. 208)

In light of this OT background and the abhorrence of homosexuality elsewhere in Scripture, there are grounds for inferring that οἱ κύνες, “the dogs,” in Rev 22:15 probably denotes practicing homosexuals. (CC p. 208)

All of the above seems intolerably harsh to our modern culture. Attempts to promote “gay” and lesbian “rights” have persuaded many, even in the Christian church, that the homosexual lifestyle is a culturally acceptable alternative to heterosexual relationships. The movement has been fueled by the rise of negative critical attitudes toward the Scriptures. (CC pp. 208-209)

In response to modern rejection of the biblical word on homosexuality, this excursus has focused on the need to take the divine Word at face value. However, none of the above justifies the abuse of homosexuals and “gay bashing,” let alone murder. Rather, our awareness of the way the Scriptures expose the spiritual danger in which the homosexual stands should lead us to adopt a pastoral approach. The last thing the suffering homosexual may need is any further application of the Law; often he will already be painfully aware of his sin.¹⁸ Sensitive pastoral care will involve assuring the homosexual person “that the pastor is speaking to him or her out of love and acceptance (but not approval),” avoiding anything that smacks of pharisaic condemnations, keeping lines of communication open for Law/Gospel ministry, opening opportunities for confession and absolution, and above all, making sure “that the proper understanding and reception of the *Gospel* is the key and goal.” (CC p. 209)

A distinctive contribution of 1 Cor 6:9–11 to this discussion is that after the list that includes “catamites” and “sodomites” (6:9), Paul includes the phrase “*and such were some of you*” (6:11). Apparently some of the Corinthian Christians had been practicing homosexuals before their conversion, before they were “washed ... sanctified ... justified” (6:11). In the modern era some have argued that it is not possible to truly change one’s sexual orientation, perhaps even because of a genetically determined predisposition. But Paul’s statement implies that a true transformation did take place; those who had been homosexuals were so no longer. Paul does not say whether this means they no longer had any homosexual thoughts or desires, but their actual behavior no longer included any homosexual activity. One might speculate that the former “adulterers” (6:9) may still have had adulterous desires, even as former “thieves” (6:10) might still have suffered from avarice. Sinful inclinations and desires will remain part of human existence as long as we remain in this fallen state (cf. Romans 7). (CC p. 209)

But the Gospel provides God's resurrection power to live a new kind of life. Baptized into Christ's death and resurrection, the Christian is called to put to death the old Adam so that the new person of faith may come forth and govern his daily life as a member of the body of Christ (Romans 6; 1 Cor 12:13). The Christians in Corinth who had been homosexuals but were so no longer stand as examples of the Gospel's power to change lives. (CC p. 209)

The Bible never provides a detailed psychological answer for homosexuality. However, Romans clearly condemns homosexuality as a corruption of God's created order. The male body is not designed to copulate with another male body. The female body is not designed to copulate with another female body. The fact that people crave such relationships proves that something has gone terribly wrong with creation. Paul argues that homosexual behavior results from idolatry and a corrupt understanding of creation (1:26–28). (TLSB)

An Example of Corruption

Many Roman citizens viewed homosexual behavior with disgust because they knew that it had undermined the Greek civilization. Such Romans prided themselves on their pro-society attitudes and held that homosexual behavior was against nature. But Paul uses the example of homosexuality to make a greater point. (TLSB)

A Roman who read Paul's Letter might think, "Yes, homosexual behavior is bad because it is bad for society. We don't do such things!" However, to Paul's readers who shake their heads in self-righteous disgust, he springs a trap with these words: "Since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless" (1:28–31). (TLSB)

Each item in the list above undermines society. And no Roman (or reader today) could claim to be free from such sins. Starting with homosexuality, Paul indicts all people for doing things that destroy society. Everyone is born with a depraved mind that leads to every kind of wickedness. Homosexual behavior is no more damning than gossip, greed, or jealousy. Those who commit such sins will face God's judgment unless they repent. The one who practices homosexual behavior will face the same Judge as a gossip, slanderer, or liar. Homosexuality stands first in the list for the apostle Paul because it so clearly demonstrates how people rebel against the Creator's order. (TLSB)

Marriage with God's Blessing

God created sex for the procreation of children and to strengthen the marital bond that supports those children (see note, Gn 1:28). Within the confines of marriage, sex is a wonderful blessing. Outside that relationship, it is idolatry—people rejecting God's order, worshiping what is created rather than the Creator. (TLSB)

Christians should abhor the sin of homosexual behavior as they abhor all sins. But at the same time, Christians should see homosexuals as people for whom Christ shed His precious blood. God wants us to recognize that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (3:23–24). A homosexual, like any other sinner, needs to hear God's word of Law and Gospel applied to his or her life with the goal of repentance and faith. (TLSB)

6:11 *some of you were. But.* God, however, does save and sanctify people like those described in vv. 9–10. (CSB)

God, in mercy, called the unrighteous into His kingdom. (TLSB)

The Righteous and the Wicked in Paul

Paul's clear distinction between the righteous and the wicked runs counter to an age-old tendency to blur the distinction. The prophet Malachi looked forward to the day when God's people would once more "distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him" (Mal 3:18). At the start of the third millennium, many people have been affected by the dominant spirit of universalism, tolerance, and inclusiveness—the spirit that says it is wrong to condemn other people's lifestyles and that God ultimately will accept all people. To many today, these sharp biblical distinctions sound incredibly intolerant. Thus even a modern translation of Luther's Small Catechism skews the Fourth Petition, so that instead of an accurate rendition of the reformer's words, such as "God provides daily bread, even to the wicked, without our prayer" (cf. Mt 5:45), we find "O God, you give daily bread to all people, though sinful." (CC)

To arrive at a fair understanding of the biblical distinction between the righteous and the wicked, it is important to remember that when the Scriptures speak of the righteous they do not mean the self-righteous. Rather, the opposite is the case: the righteous are those who humbly repent of their sins and "hunger and thirst" for the righteousness which God confers on them by his grace alone (Mt 5:6; 6:33). The wicked, on the other hand, are those who repudiate repentance and spurn God's grace. (CC)

The Formula of Concord's article "Good Works" underlines Paul's warnings to the wicked with admirable clarity (FC SD IV 31–32):

Therefore we must begin by earnestly criticizing and rejecting the false Epicurean delusion which some dream up that it is impossible to lose faith and the gift of righteousness and salvation, once it has been received, through any sin, even a wanton and deliberate one, or through wicked works; and that even though a Christian follows his evil lusts without fear and shame, resists the Holy Spirit, and deliberately proceeds to sin against his conscience, he can nevertheless retain faith, the grace of God, righteousness, and salvation. We should often, with all diligence and earnestness, repeat and impress upon Christians who have been justified by faith these true, immutable, and divine threats and earnest punishments and admonitions: "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?" ... (I Cor. 6:9). (CC)

The abominable practices named in 1 Cor 5:9–11 and 6:9–10 had characterized some of the Corinthians in the past (6:11). Paul often distinguishes between the dark days of his readers' former lives, what they had been before conversion (*ποτέ*, "once"), and what, by God's grace, they had become "now." We may compare Eph 5:8 ("For you were *once* darkness, but *now* [you are] light in the Lord") and Titus 3:3 ("For we also were *once* foolish"). In Corinth, only some of the people had sunk as low as the groups mentioned in 1 Cor 6:9–10. And for them too, that belonged to their former life. An enormous change in their spiritual state had taken place, a change which rings out in the thrice-repeated *ἀλλά* ("but" in 6:11): "That's what you were *once*, but *now* all is different!" (CC)

Those who condone and those who practice sins such as Paul lists in 6:9–11 may offer a variety of explanations in order to excuse such behavior. Among those explanations are ones that claim

that certain people have an innate predisposition toward certain sins. That predisposition may be attributable to genetic factors or other inherited traits, or to the environment in which a person was raised. Homosexuality and alcoholism are two sins regarding which researchers have looked for, and some have claimed to have found, genetic factors. (CC)

But Paul's statement in 6:11, "such *were* some of you. But you were washed ... sanctified ... justified" implies that the grace of God has the power to overcome all sins. Regardless of what factors may be involved, God's grace "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" and "the Spirit of our God" (6:11) are able to defeat those sins. The Christian, by the power of the Spirit, can and must put to death the deeds of the sinful flesh, and daily rise to new life by virtue of Baptism into Christ's death and resurrection (Romans 6; 1 Cor 12:13). "Now having been set free from sin, and having become servants of God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, with the end result of eternal life" (Rom 6:22). "If you live according to the flesh, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live" (Rom 8:13). (CC)

washed ... sanctified ... justified. Terms of salvation, used interchangeably (see pp 1903–4). Baptism makes us new creatures, holy with Christ's righteousness. "Whenever God's Word is taught, preached, heard, read, or meditated upon, then the person, day, and work are sanctified. This is not because of the outward work, but because of the Word, which makes saints of us all. Therefore, I constantly say that all our life and work must be guided by God's Word, if it is to be God-pleasing or holy" (LC I 92). (TLSB)

Paul's statement "but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified" (6:11) functions in a similar way to the indicative of 5:7, "Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed." There the consequential imperative "clean out the old leaven" (5:7) rested on the indicative of the Gospel; here, too, in 6:9–11 Paul's warnings are intended to prevent the congregation from falling away from God's gracious work in Christ Jesus. (CC)

In 6:11 Paul describes what God has done for the Corinthians with three verbs in the aorist (simple past) tense, all of which point to different facets of their conversion. The order he follows is a logical one that suits the context, rather than a theological order. It is logical to mention first that they "were *washed*." The filth of their pagan past had been washed away. The apostle is pointing to the washing away of sin in Baptism, the "washing [λουτρῶ] of water in the Word" (Eph 5:26), the "washing [λουτροῦ] of regeneration" (Titus 3:5). The only other time the verb ἀπολούω is used in the NT is in Acts 22:16, where Baptism is explicitly in view: "Arise and *be baptized* and *wash away your sins*." And when we couple Acts 22:16 to Eph 5:26 and Titus 3:5, in which Paul uses the related noun λουτρόν, "washing," in connection with Baptism (especially indisputable in Eph 5:26), the impression that Baptism is in view here also in 1 Cor 6:11 becomes overwhelming. (CC)

In connection with that washing they "were *sanctified*" in Christ Jesus (ἡγιασθητε, 6:11; similarly, Paul, in his opening greeting, described them as "having been sanctified," ἡγιασμένοις, 1:2). By faith in Christ's atoning blood their hearts had been cleansed and sanctified, so that they had become people dedicated to God. Now they were "called saints" (κλητοὶ ἅγιοι, 1 Cor 1:2) who enjoyed fellowship with Jesus Christ and had begun to walk in his marvelous light. What they had become by faith—holy, sanctified people—they should become in practice and living. (CC)

From another angle, their great transition from darkness to light as demarcated by the sanctifying waters of Baptism, their transformation from what they were “once” (Titus 3:3) to what (by God’s mercy) they are now, can be viewed as their *justification*. As the last of the three aorists, ἐδικαιώθητε (“you were justified,” i.e., “declared *righteous*”) nicely rounds off the unit, which began with the warning to the “*unrighteous*” (ἄδικοι) in 1 Cor 6:9. Having been pronounced justified, free from sin’s guilt and its consequence, death, the Corinthians must see that persistence in unrighteousness is incompatible with faith and life in Christ. (CC)

The two prepositional phrases which conclude this section reveal an “unobtrusive Trinitarianism.” The Corinthians’ washing, their sanctification, and their justification had all been accomplished “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the [Holy] Spirit of our God” (6:11). We may also detect some resemblance between these phrases and the Trinitarian formula of Baptism in Mt 28:19, “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” In confirmation of this observation it may be noted that sometimes the NT, using only the words of the first of these two phrases at the end of 1 Cor 6:11 as a shorthand version of the Trinitarian formula, refers to Baptism “in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 2:38; 10:48) or “in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 8:16; 19:5). Through faith and Baptism in the name of Jesus, the Corinthians had been granted spiritual wholeness (ὁλοκληρία, Acts 3:16); through the power of “the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:11), they had been regenerated and made a spiritual temple (3:16–17). In Baptism they were given the Holy Spirit to drink (1 Cor 12:13). That the Spirit now dwells in their bodies has profound implications for their Christian life, and to that subject Paul now turns (6:12–20). (CC)

in the name of the Lord Jesus ... Spirit ... God. Trinitarian, as is fitting with reference to Baptism. (TLSB)

6:1–11 When the old sinful nature rises to cause grievances between Christians, it also tempts us to seek satisfaction through secular processes. God calls churches to settle grievances through Law and Gospel before matters get out of hand. He has already judged us “not guilty” in view of Jesus’ sacrifice, and He has washed us pure in Holy Baptism. • Spare us, Lord, from the temptation to resort to the ways of the world. Purify us, Holy Spirit, through the daily washing of repentance. Seat us, O God, in Your kingdom as people with true discernment. Amen. (TLSB)

Sexual Immorality

¹² **“Everything is permissible for me”—but not everything is beneficial.**
“Everything is permissible for me”—but I will not be mastered by anything. ¹³
“Food for the stomach and the stomach for food”—but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴ **By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.** ¹⁵ **Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never!** ¹⁶ **Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.”** ¹⁷ **But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.** ¹⁸ **Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.** ¹⁹ **Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy**

**Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;
20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.**

Paul has just warned the Corinthians that living in sin is incompatible with the Christian faith; no one who does so will inherit God's kingdom (1 Cor 6:9–10). This is a most serious statement. Now Paul turns to another issue in which the Corinthians were failing to show proper judgment and spiritual discernment and so were jeopardizing their salvation. In chapter 5 he dealt with their failure to judge a man who was guilty of a form of sexual immorality not even found among pagans. In 6:1–11 he expressed his concern that the Corinthians seemed incapable of judging and settling disputes among themselves. Now he addresses their lack of discernment regarding a form of sexual immorality which was very much to be found—even taken for granted—among pagans, and which apparently persisted among some recent converts from paganism. (CC)

Not only was prostitution legal in Paul's day, but it was socially acceptable for men to have sexual relations both with boys and with prostitutes. Paul included two terms for homosexuals among those who will not enter God's kingdom (6:9). Some of the Corinthian Christians seem to have defended their right to continue consorting with prostitutes. "After all," they may have argued in the Stoic-Cynic fashion, "we are σοφοί ['wise'], we are 'free to do anything.' We now move on a higher plane; what we do with our bodies does not affect our new spiritual existence." Concerned at this perversion of Christian freedom, Paul warns the church that resorting to prostitutes definitely comes under his condemnation of sexual immorality (πορνεία, 6:13, 18). Such behavior excludes a person from God's kingdom (6:9–10). The remedy—Christian marriage—is set forth in chapter 7. (CC)

Paul's response to the Corinthians' sinful laxity falls into three parts: (1) In 6:12–14 he quotes the slogans they used to justify visiting prostitutes, and adds some correctives. He also tries to instill a proper respect for the body as belonging to the Lord. (2) In 6:15–17 he argues specifically against prostitution, showing the incompatibility of union with a prostitute and union with Christ. (3) Finally (6:18–20), in case they still haven't been persuaded, he specifically forbids sexual immorality with a direct command. (CC)

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6:12-13 The quoted words may be slogans to which Paul is responding. (TLSB)

6:12 *Everything is permissible for me.* Paul is probably quoting some in the Corinthian congregation who boasted that they had a right to do anything they pleased. The apostle counters by observing that such "freedom" of action may not benefit the Christian. (CSB)

All ... lawful. An expression of freedom. (TLSB)

The slogan “all things are in my power” (6:12) seems to have arisen from pagan Greek philosophy. The Corinthians may have tried to justify it by appealing to their newly found freedom and spiritual power in Christ. As Christians, each of them was “a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none.”²³ But they failed to understand that Christian freedom from sin and the Law’s condemnation is *not* freedom *to sin*, but instead is freedom to live by the power of the Spirit in accord with God’s Law (e.g., Romans 6; 13:10). Christians must keep in mind the other part of the paradox: a Christian is also “a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.” To that end, Paul supplies the necessary corrective: “Not all things are beneficial” (1 Cor 6:12; cf. 7:35). The verb συμφέρει (“are beneficial”) is synonymous with οικοδομεῖ (“build up”) in the parallel passage in 10:23 (“not all things build up”; cf. also 12:7). The Corinthians have been thinking only of themselves, rejoicing in their spiritual privileges, without giving sufficient thought to what benefits the whole body of Christ. They are causing offense to the Gospel and are defaming their Lord. (CC)

Christian freedom is to be used for what is helpful and good and right. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

not all ... helpful. Freedom, however, includes the ability to make unproductive and destructive choices. (TLSB)

not be mastered by anything. One may become enslaved by those actions in which he “freely” indulges (see [note](#) on 10:23). (CSB)

“Freedom of choice” can itself become a master if we follow our will rather than God’s. (TLSB)

exousiadzo is passive and means “to exercise power over, to wield authority over others.” When Christians say “everything is permissible” without recognizing at the same time the all-encompassing, life-giving authority of Christ (Mt 28:18), they are in danger of being re-enslaved and mastered by the sin from which Christ freed them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

2 Peter 2:19-20 “They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him. If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning.”

Galatians 5:1 “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”

As they sin, they are remaining enslaved to the passions of their sinful nature, which must be crucified and die (e.g., Rom 6:6–11). Scripture sometimes personifies sin as a tyrant, which tries to overpower its devotees and keep them subject to its authority (Gen

4:7; Rom 6:12–16). Like the ancient serpent (Gen 3:5) and the false prophets castigated in 2 Peter, sin promises freedom, but fails to deliver; its subjects find themselves caught in a cycle of bondage and corruption that leads to death and hell. “A person is a slave to whatever masters him” (2 Pet 2:19). Those who call Christ “Lord” are to serve him, not their passions. (CC p. 215))

6:13 *Food for the stomach and the stomach for food.* Paul quotes some Corinthians again who were claiming that as the physical acts of eating and digesting food have no bearing on one’s inner spiritual life, so the physical act of promiscuous sexual activity does not affect one’s spiritual life. (CSB)

Suggests freedom from dietary laws (cf Mk 2:27). (TLSB)

Paul cites another of the Corinthians’ slogans, “The foods are for the stomach, and the stomach is for the foods, and God will destroy both it and them” (1 Cor 6:13). It was the Christian position that all foods were clean (Mk 7:19; Acts 10:9–15) and could be eaten freely. But the Corinthians seem to have drawn an analogy between the need to satisfy one’s hunger with all kinds of food, and an (alleged) need to satisfy one’s sexual appetite, even if it meant resorting to prostitutes. Thus, they apparently claimed, sexual indulgence is as natural as eating. Besides, what one does with one’s physical body is unimportant; God will one day destroy it just as he will destroy the foods that sustain it.²⁶ So a person may just as well “eat and drink [and fornicate!], for tomorrow we die” (1 Cor 15:32). (CC)

The Corinthians were trying to equate the appetite for food with the appetite for sex. If there’s no spiritual consequence to eating various foods, they would say, why should there be any spiritual consequence in having sexual relations with someone apart from marriage? They were trying to separate body and soul, their spiritual and physical lives. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

GOD WILL DESTROY THEM BOTH – *katargeo* means to “make ineffective, to do away with.” The organs of digestion will be changed at the resurrection and the physical constitution of the resurrected body will be different from that of the mortal body. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

Neither is eternal. This does not mean they are unimportant. (TLSB)

The body ... for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. The body is important to the Lord, who made it. It is a temple dedicated to God (v 19). (TLSB)

The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord. Paul here declares the dignity of the human body: It is intended for the Lord. Although granting that food and the stomach are transitory, Paul denies that what one does with his body is unimportant. This is particularly true of the use of sex, which the Lord has ordained in wedlock for the good of mankind (cf. Heb 13:4). (CSB)

Sin naturally destroys both body and soul, which even unbelievers could recognize. (TLSB)

But Paul rejects the analogy between eating and sexual sins. To be sure, foods belong to this passing age, as do our bellies with their digestive functions. True, marriage and reproduction will not continue in heaven (Mt 22:30). All these belong to “the form of this world” that “is passing away” (1 Cor 7:31), the corruptible “flesh and blood” which cannot inherit the kingdom of God (15:50). But Paul distinguishes bellies from bodies. The belly, representing digestion as a process necessary to sustain life, may pass away, but the body will be raised. Plato and other Greek philosophers had a low view of the body. But the biblical view is that the body, as the physical aspect of a person and an essential part of human beings, created by God, is to be honored. A Christian’s body is God’s property, an integral part of a person he has redeemed and claimed for the resurrection. At the resurrection, our bodies will be transformed to be like Christ’s glorious body (Phil 3:21; cf. Mt 22:20; 1 Cor 15:44, 51). With this glorious destiny ahead of us, God’s will for our bodies is not immorality, but sanctification and unhindered devotion to the Lord Jesus (1 Cor 7:35; 1 Thess 4:3). Compare Rom 14:7–8, where Paul again uses the dative of personal benefit (as in 1 Cor 6:13: “the body is . . . *for* the Lord, and the Lord is *for* the body”) in speaking of the mutual devotion of the Lord and the believer: “For none of us lives to himself and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s.” (CC)

A major reason for ascribing such dignity to the body is God’s promise of the bodily resurrection. Paul’s argument against the Corinthians degrading of the body by sexual sinning continues with an appeal to this fundamental doctrine. Just as God raised the Lord Jesus’ body from the grave (15:4, 15, 20; see also Rom 8:11), so he “will raise us” (1 Cor 6:14). Paul identifies himself with all those who, by the time of the parousia, will have died in Christ (cf. 2 Cor 4:14). God will achieve this great result of resurrection “through his power” (1 Cor 6:14). According to the parallel in Rom 8:11, God’s powerful instrument for raising our mortal bodies will be “his Spirit, who dwells in us” (see Mk 12:24 and 2 Cor 13:4 on the resurrection as a display of God’s power). (CC)

Paul is trying to show them that there is no separation between their physical and spiritual lives. This would be a particularly significant statement to someone living in Greek culture. For the Greek generally thought of the body as inferior to the spirit, especially in the realm of religion. The body was at best incidental and at worst an encumbrance to one’s religious life. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

Porneia means “unchastity, fornication, prostitution, every kind of sexual activity outside of marriage.” It is the Greek word behind English “pornography.” From the same root is *porne*, “prostitute,” in verse 15 and 16. So bad was the moral condition of Corinth that one of ancient writers coined the word *Corinthianize* to mean “practice fornication.” God put his blessing on the first man and woman as the two became flesh in holy matrimony. Those who become one flesh sexually outside of the holy bond of marriage have no share in that blessing, and are under the curse of God’s law. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

6:14 *God raised the Lord ... us also.* As an illustration of God’s high regard for the body, Paul cites the resurrection of Christ’s body and, eventually, the believer’s body

(15:51–53; 1Th 4:16–17). A body destined for resurrection should not be used for immorality. (CSB)

A crucial fact: the Lord cares enough for the body that He resurrects and glorifies it (cf 15:20). (TLSB)

Here in 1 Cor 6:14 Paul is stating briefly what he will spell out at length in chapter 15. The doctrine of the bodily resurrection has important ethical implications for the Christian life. In chapter 15, the apostle speaks in general of the way our resurrection hope should dispel the frivolous attitudes of those who say, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (15:32). In our present text, his specific concern is to show the folly of associating with prostitutes in light of the glorious destiny God has in store for our bodies. The Christian’s body belongs to Christ, the Lord (6:13), and so the Christian must not defile Christ’s possession by sexual immorality. (CC)

In this connection Baptism and the Lord’s Supper pertain to the Christian’s proper use of his body. In Baptism the body is washed (Eph 5:26; Titus 3:5–7) and the name of the Lord Jesus is applied (1 Cor 1:9–16). The baptized believer, body and soul, belongs to the Lord. In Baptism a person is made a member of Christ’s body (1 Cor 12:13). The Lord’s Supper is a communion in the body and blood of Christ (10:16), which the communicant receives into his body orally (11:23–32). The Christian must recognize and discern Christ’s body (11:29), lest he sin against the body and blood of Christ (11:27). Since the Christian is a member of Christ’s body and has received Christ’s body and blood, his body must be kept pure “for the Lord” (6:13). (CC)

In order to emphasize the integral role the body in one’s “spiritual” life and its value to God, Paul goes on to speak about the resurrection. If the body was insignificant or irrelevant to one’s life before God, why would it be raised from the dead? Why should we have a Lord who himself was bodily raised from the dead? Since we look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come, then certainly what we do in the body is an essential and vital aspect of our Christian lives in this world right now. Paul also makes the fundamental connection between Christ’s resurrection and our own. It is by the same power that both he and we are raised from the dead. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

Romans 8:11 “And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.”

6:15–17 members. Gk *melos*, “limb” or “part” of a body. *members of a prostitute?* Sexual intercourse is a union so intimate that the two become one flesh (Gn 2:24). A fornicator or adulterer involves Christ and all the Church in his or her sin. *joined to the Lord.* Union with God is not crassly physical, like that with the prostitute, but spiritual (cf 3:1). (TLSB)

6:15 DO YOU NOT KNOW – For the fourth time in this chapter, Paul asks, “Don’t you know?” (6:15; also 6:2, 3, 9). This is the first occurrence in his epistles of the analogy of Christ’s body and its members. It will recur in 1 Cor 12:12–31 and Rom 12:4–8. This analogy probably was part of Paul’s fundamental instruction to the Corinthian converts.

The imagery seems to have arisen from the connection Paul draws between the communion with Christ's body in the Lord's Supper and the church thereby being built up as "one body" (1 Cor 10:16–17). Part of the background may also be found in the apostle's experience on the Damascus Road, when the Lord asked him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" In persecuting the members of the church, Paul was persecuting the head to whom they belonged and with whom they were organically joined. Christ is the head of his church and of each believer (11:3). (CC p. 217)

members of Christ. See 12:27. It is not merely the spirit that is a member of Christ's body; it is the whole person, consisting of spirit and body. This fact gives dignity to the human body. (CSB)

We are both spiritually and physically joined to Christ by means of his Word and Spirit and body and blood. This saving, life-giving Gospel reality is the foundation of all that Paul says in this passage. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

Against this background, the apostle is understandably horrified at the idea that some of Christ's members (μέλη) were being removed from their intimate connection with their head and made members (μέλη) of a prostitute. Morris comments: "The use of the same word both times [μέλη, 'members'] brings out something of the intimacy and incongruity of the union with the prostitute. There is a horrible profanation of that which should be used only for Christ." (CC p. 217)

UNITE THEM WITH A PROSTITUTE...NEVER – Paul is likely referring to pagan prostitutes. It is inconceivable that a Christian's body, which is a member of Christ's body, would be joined to another's body for sexual immorality. . (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

Paul's abhorrence is expressed in the words μή γένοιτο, "By no means!" or "God forbid!" (6:15). We find this expression in passages where Paul finds himself in fundamental opposition to views that would destroy the essentials of the faith. (CC p. 218)

1 Corinthians 12:13 "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink."

6:16 With another "don't you know?" (6:16), Paul addresses the issue of the close intimacy between a man and a prostitute. The participle κολλώμενος, "who joins himself," comes from a verb which in classical Greek meant "to glue, cement." In the KJV, the verb is sometimes translated "to cleave" (e.g., Mt 19:5; Rom 12:9). But the close bonding that takes place when two pieces of paper are glued together, or when one pane of glass is laid on top of another, are inadequate analogies to describe the fusion of two persons into one physical entity in the act of sexual intercourse, that "unique mode of self-disclosure and self-commitment." In a mysterious way, the two become one (Eph 5:32). God intended this to happen only within the covenant of marriage, which is the lifelong union of one man and one woman (Mt 19:3–6). However, Paul warns, even in the gross caricature that takes place when a man consorts with a prostitute, he becomes one body with her. As Seebass has commented, "He who unites himself to a harlot has

a common existence with her. There is no purely sexual sin. The spirit of the brothel and the Spirit of Christ mutually exclude one another.” Similarly, Morris comments: “ ‘Casual sex’ is anything but casual. It is an act of sacrilege. Temples like our bodies are not meant for profanations like this.” (CC)

one with her in body. In a sexual relationship the two bodies become one (cf. Ge 2:24; Mt 19:5), and a new human being may emerge from the sexual union. Sexual relations outside the marriage bond are a gross perversion of the divinely established marriage union. (CSB)

Paul now adds the scriptural basis. While the Creator’s words in Gen 2:24 describe and undergird the institution of marriage (Mt 19:5; Eph 5:31), they also describe the relationship that develops when a man visits a prostitute. They, too, are no longer two, but “one flesh” (1 Cor 6:16). But unlike a man and woman joined in holy matrimony, unmarried sexual partners are bonded together in an unholy union which results in “both defilement and confusion.” Desecration is the result not only of prostitution, but also of unmarried heterosexual lovers, and of all homosexual and lesbian relationships. (CC)

This “one flesh” bonding with anyone other than the lawfully wedded spouse is simply incompatible with the believer’s union with the Lord. As Paul warned in 6:9–10, those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. In Deut 10:20, Moses commands God’s people: “You shall fear the Lord your God; him alone you shall worship; to him you *shall hold fast*” (LXX: κολλάω, as in 1 Cor 6:16). The psalmist confesses: “For me it is good to *cling to* [LXX: προσκολλάω] God” (Ps 73:28 [LXX 72:28]). Solomon’s downfall resulted when his devotion to the Lord weakened and he began to *consort with* (LXX: κολλάω) many foreign women (1 Ki 11:2). (CC)

6:17 *one with him in spirit.* There is a higher union than the marriage bond: the believer’s spiritual union with Christ, which is the perfect model for the kind of unity that should mark the marriage relationship (cf. Eph 5:21–33). (CSB)

The middle verb form kollaomai, “to join oneself together with another suggests an active and ongoing involvement with Christ in spiritual and sacramental life. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

But the person who is united with the Lord “is one spirit [with him]” (1 Cor 6:17). His union with the Lord was effected through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, poured out in Baptism and operative through God’s faith-generating Word (1 Cor 12:13). When the words of Christ, which are Spirit and life, dwell in his heart, he enjoys a spiritual, mystical union with his Lord, even as a bride enjoys union with her bridegroom. John’s gospel describes this union as a mutual indwelling: Christ dwells in the believer; the believer dwells in Christ. (Jn 6:63; 14:23; 15:4–5; cf. 1 Cor 3:16–17; 6:19) (CC p. 219)

6:18 FLEE FROM SEXUAL IMMORALITY – phaugo is a present imperative and suggests a continual, habitual fleeing from sin, in the same way a person would flee

from any life-threatening danger. The same verb occurs in Mk 14:52. Joseph too ran away without his garment, but he is an excellent illustration of literally fleeing from adultery (Gen 39:12-18). Sexual sin desecrates the body in a way unlike any other sin. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

Finally, the apostle pleads, “Flee from sexual immorality!” (6:18). Christians must run away from sexual temptations, as Joseph fled from Potiphar’s wife (Gen 39:12). Christians should not dally with temptation, but “flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace” (2 Tim 2:22; cf. 1 Cor 10:8; 1 Tim 6:11). (CC)

It is most likely that 1 Cor 6:18b is part of Paul’s own argument and not another Corinthian slogan in defense of the Corinthians’ view that their sexual sins did not threaten their salvation. Assuming all of the words in 6:18 are Paul’s words, the meaning must be that sexual sins harm the body and personality like no other sins. All other sins, by contrast, are “outside the body.” What this means has been subject to debate. Other sins, too, like drunkenness and gluttony, have their grim effects on the body. However, those sins involve the abuse of things which come from outside the body; sexual immorality involves the direct misuse of the body itself.⁴¹ Fisk writes: “Other sins may be physically destructive (e.g. suicide, gluttony), corporately destructive (e.g. gossip, divisiveness), or spiritually defiling (e.g. idolatry) but for Paul, because sexual sin is uniquely body-joining, it is uniquely body-defiling.” The ravages of sexually transmitted diseases tend to confirm that assessment. Later in his epistle to the Romans, Paul will refer to the bodily harm suffered by the sexually immoral. God gives them over to “the degrading of their bodies with one another” (Rom 1:24). This is “the due penalty for their perversion” (Rom 1:27, specifically about homosexuality and lesbianism; cf. 1 Cor 6:9). (CC)

Not a call to monasticism (cf 5:10), but a call to live in the world without accommodating its morality. (TLSB)

other sins ... are outside his body. Perhaps means that in a unique way, sexual immorality gratifies one’s physical body. Or, since the word “other” does not occur in the Greek text, Paul may be quoting a Corinthian slogan (see [note](#) on v. 12), which he refutes in the second half of the verse. (CSB)

Paul is focused on self-indulgent sins (6:9–10) rather than self-destructive sins such as suicide or murder. Sexual sins uniquely involve sinning against others with the body as an instrument, in contrast with gluttony, drunkenness, etc. (TLSB)

he who sins sexually sins against his own body. The body is a temple of the Holy Spirit (v. 19); thus to use it in prostitution disgraces God’s temple. Furthermore, the prostitutes of Corinth were dedicated to the service of Aphrodite, the goddess of love and sex. (CSB)

Thus, Paul has argued, not only does the sexually immoral person sin against the church and her spiritual union with the Lord (6:15–17), but he also defiles his own body. This body, which has been consecrated by God as a temple of his Holy Spirit (3:16–17), which has been bought for a price, and which is destined for resurrection, has now been

torn from its spiritual union with Christ and joined in an unholy union. Again, that desecration takes place in all sinful liaisons—in any sexual act besides that between husband and wife. (CC p. 220)

6:19 *your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.* The Christian should value his body as a sacred place where God dwells and should realize that by the Spirit's presence and power he can be helped against such sins as sexual immorality (Ro 8:9). (CSB)

A word to the congregation; “body” is singular and “you” is plural throughout the passage. This is a bold illustration of congregational unity with one another and with God. (TLSB)

A sixth and final “don’t you know?” (6:19) shows Paul’s agitation over what seems to have been a widespread problem. Now he reminds the Corinthians of the high honor God has bestowed on their bodies in making them temples of the Holy Spirit, whom they had received from him. The bright cloud of God’s glorious presence had filled the tabernacle and then the temple which replaced it (Ex 40:34–38; 1 Ki 8:10–11). Those structures had been superseded by the greater temple, the body of the Lord Jesus himself (Jn 2:21). Each believer in Christ serves as a “living stone,” a mini-temple of the Spirit within the great “spiritual house” of the new aeon (1 Pet 2:4–5). (CC p. 220)

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Back in 1 Cor 3:16–17 Paul had spoken of the whole congregation as God’s temple. There his concern was the sins of jealousy, strife, and pride, which were tearing the congregation apart. Now, in ascribing the glorious designation “temple” to each believer (6:19), he wishes to impress on the Corinthians that abusing their bodies by sinning sexually violates the very holiness and presence of God. Since the Holy Spirit had taken up residence in their bodies through Baptism (12:13), this indwelling had given “a dignity to the whole of life, such as nothing else could do.” They should take care not to grieve their divine guest (Eph 4:30; 1 Thess 5:19). Hays speaks of the church’s need to recover the Pauline image of “the body as temple”:

Sex education ... might begin by seeking to cultivate a deep awareness of the indwelling presence of God. An authentic reverence for the reality of the Holy Spirit’s presence in our bodies might facilitate the recovery of the Bible’s powerful categories of holiness and purity as meaningful norms for our sexual practices. Could the teaching of such reverence within the church help to overcome the growing cultural tendency to accept premarital and extramarital sexual relations as normal and inevitable? (CC)

Naos means “temple, dwelling place, sanctuary.” As opposed to a pagan temple where prostitution occurred, our own bodies are the temple of the Spirit, but not in an individualistic sense. Our bodies are the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit because they are

members of the body of Christ, who is the new temple. . (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

John 2:19 “Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”

1 Peter 2:5 “you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

not your own. Cf. 1Pe 2:9. (CSB)

In contrast to the Corinthians’ slogan (v 12), the believer is God’s child, a member of His household. (TLSB)

This flies in the face of the thinking of our culture. Nevertheless, Christians know that they don’t have the right to control their own body, in regard to sex or anything else; for their body is not really theirs. It belongs to God alone who created, redeemed, and sanctified it. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

Now that their bodies had become the Spirit’s residence, the Corinthians could no longer live for themselves (see Rom 14:7). “You are not your own,” Paul writes (1 Cor 6:19). Earlier he had reminded them whose they really were: “You are Christ’s” (3:23)—and God’s. (CC p. 221)

6:20 WERE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE – *agoradzo* means “to buy in the market place” (agora, “market, public square”). It is used for the purchasing of slaves in 7:23. Christ bought us and freed us from our slavery to sin, death, and the devil. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

Living for themselves as if they were autonomous, “free,” and “in control” was no longer possible, “for you were bought for a price” (ἠγοράσθητε γὰρ τιμῆς, 6:20). No other NT saying brings together in such compact form both the essence of the Gospel and its implications for the Christian life. So powerful is this idea that Paul repeats it in 7:23. On the one hand, the Gospel shines forth brilliantly, pointing to God’s once-for-all action on Calvary as an accomplished fact. On Calvary, the ransom price was paid, “not with silver or gold ... but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish or spot” (1 Pet 1:18–19; cf. Acts 20:28). God’s grace did not come cheaply! It was a costly ransom from slavery, from captivity to the power of sin (Rom 6:18, 22). Like the rest of the NT, 1 Corinthians is rich in metaphors describing God’s acquisition of the sinner and the sinner’s liberation from the hands of his tyrannical masters, using terms like “redemption” (ἀπολύτρωσις, 1 Cor 1:30) (Also Rom 3:24; Eph 1:7; cf. Gal 4:5) and “acquire, win” (Paul acquires or wins people for God, κερδαίνω, 1 Cor 9:19–22). Again Paul’s theology of the cross comes to the fore in a succinct and powerful way. (CC p. 221)

honor God with your body. Cf. 10:31; Ro 6:12–13; Col 3:17. (CSB)

Not simply in personal goodness, but in faith and hope as members of Christ's Body. (TLSB)

At the same time, God's purchase of the sinner from slavery does not mean he is now free to go his own way. Rather, through that purchase he comes under new ownership. Implicit in the Gospel, while it retains its character as a free expression of God's grace, is the understanding that the believer now has a new Lord. At the same time he rejoices both in his freedom and also that he has become a slave of Christ (7:22). This "slavery" is perfect freedom because it frees a person to serve God in holiness and righteousness, as God originally intended for his creatures. Christ's yoke is easy, and his burden is light (Mt 11:30). (CC pp. 221-222)

So, having opened the final paragraph of the chapter with the negative command "flee from sexual immorality!" (6:18), Paul closes it with the positive exhortation "glorify God in your body!" (6:20). The apostle expects the Corinthians to follow his example (4:16; 11:1) so that their entire life magnifies Christ (Phil 1:20). His appeal to them as God's temple is similar to the great introduction to Romans 12: "I urge you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice that is living, holy, acceptable to God" (Rom 12:1). (CC)

6:12–20 Because Christ has united us with Him and with one another, immorality has no place among us. Freedom to live in Christ excludes living in opposition to Him. When we fall into sin, we can repent of the disunity we have brought. Jesus Christ will restore and renew us as His very own. • Father, be glorified in our freedom, which You grant us in Jesus. Amen. (TLSB)