

## First Epistle to the Corinthians

### 11 – Essay Two: Sex – Theology of Sexual Practice: Joining the Body (2.3)

1 Corinthians 6:13-20

1. Organizational alternatives for this text
  - a. *ESV Study Bible*
    - i. A Report of Sexual Immorality and Legal Wrangling (5:1–6:20)
      1. Incest, arrogance, and the need for discipline (5:1–13)
      2. Trivial cases before unrighteous judges (6:1–11)
      3. Sexual immorality and the body’s resurrection (6:12–20)
  - b. *Reading the New Testament: 1 Corinthians*
    - i. A: Separation for the Sake of Salvation : Sexual problem (incest) (5:1-13)
    - ii. B: The Costs of Going to Court: Problem of lawsuits (6:1-11)
    - iii. A’: Keeping the Bedroom Attached to the Rest of the House: Sexual problem (fornication) (6:12-20)
  - c. *New International Commentary, New Testament: The First Epistle*
    - i. In Response to Reports (1:10-6:20)
      1. Immorality and Litigation: Test Cases of the Crisis of Authority and Gospel (5:1-6:20)
        - a. The Case of the Incestuous Man (5:1-13)
        - b. A Case of Litigation (6:1-11)
        - c. On Going to the Prostitutes (6:12-20)
  - d. Bailey<sup>1</sup> (Essay Two Subject: Men and Women in the Human Family)
    - i. Immorality and the Church (4:17-6:8)
    - ii. (Three Road Blocks: Leaven, Immorality, and the Law Courts [5:6b-6:8])
    - iii. Theology of Sexual Practice: Kingdom Ethics (6:9-12)
    - iv. Theology of Sexual Practice: Joining the Body (6:13-20)
    - v. Sexual Practice in Harmony with the Gospel (7:1-40)
2. Earlier Summaries
  - a. Paul sees arrogance among some of the Corinthians believers as the primary issue
    - i. Sexual immorality is a symptom of arrogance
    - ii. The rest of the community has failed to address the problems
    - iii. Paul calls on the community to publicly remove the offender thus showing what is honorable and shameful to the community
  - b. Paul addresses three objections Corinthian believers might raise
    - i. Leaven: It’s just a small thing
      1. Paul: small problems will grow if ignored
    - ii. Associations: We’re free to do anything as long as we keep away from non-Christians
      1. Paul: Freedom is for the purpose of mission
    - iii. Lawsuits: The church can’t agree, so we’ll let outside courts decide
      1. Paul: Live as honorable members of society, taking responsibility for yourselves by meeting societal expectations of a good community
  - c. Paul reminds the Corinthian believers what it means to live as members of God’s kingdom
    - i. Kingdom living cannot be reduced to a list of “don’ts.”
    - ii. Kingdom living is being helpful to others
    - iii. Don’t let freedom cancel itself out by turning it into an idol

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<sup>1</sup> Bailey, *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in 1 Corinthians*, loc. 1777

Table 1: Bailey, location 2110

	Verse	Text – 1 Corinthians 6:13-20 (ESV)	Motifs
<b>1a</b> <b>b</b> <b>c</b> <b>d</b>	13a	Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food— <u>and God will destroy both one</u> [ <i>and God both this</i> ] <u>and the other.</u> [ <i>and that will destroy</i> ]	Food for stomach  God will destroy food God will destroy stomach
<b>2a</b> <b>b</b> <b>c</b> <b>d</b>	13b- 14	The body <u>is not meant for sexual immorality</u> [ <i>not for prostitution</i> ], but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.	Body for the Lord - not your own <i>Resurrection</i> God raised the Lord God will raise us
<b>3e</b> <b>f</b> <b>g</b>	15a	Do you not know that your bodies [ <i>p/</i> ] are members of Christ?	Our bodies In Christ
<b>4</b>   <b>h</b> <b>i</b> <b>j</b>	15b	Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never!  <i>[So taking away the members of Christ shall I make them members of a prostitute? May it never be!]</i>	Sin against Christ
<b>5k</b> <b>l</b>	16a	Or do you not know that <u>he who is joined to</u> [ <i>the one joining</i> ] a prostitute becomes one body with her?	One body with prostitute
<b>6</b>	16b	For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh." [Gen 2:24]	Scripture: two--one flesh
<b>7k</b> <b>l</b>	17	But <u>he who is joined</u> [ <i>the one joining</i> ] to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.	One spirit with the Lord
<b>8h</b> <b>i</b> <b>j</b>	18	Flee from <u>sexual immorality</u> [ <i>prostitution</i> ]. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the <i>sexually</i> immoral person sins against his own body.	Sin against Own body

	Verse	Text – 1 Corinthians 6:13-20 (ESV)	Motifs
9e f g	19a	<i>Or do you not know that your body [sg] is a <u>temple</u> [sanctuary] of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?</i>	Your body  Of Holy Spirit From God
10a- b c d	19b- 20	You are not your own <sup>2</sup> , <i>for</i> you were bought with a price. So glorify [ <i>honor</i> ] God in your body.	Not your own Cross - with body Resurrection - glorify God

### 3. Initial observations and questions

- a. Most translations and commentaries place v.12 into this section (6:12-20)
  - i. “All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything. (ESV)
  - ii. Bailey sees v.12 as the end to the preceding section on topic of Kingdom living and proper understanding of freedom
- b. Overall rhetoric structure
  - i. Ring composition with intro: ( 1 + 2 & 10; 3 & 9; 4 & 8; 5 – 6 – 7)
  - ii. Strong internal parallelisms within segments: (1 & 2; 3 & 9; 5 & 7)
    1. Other corresponding segments are weaker, more thematic than rhetorical
  - iii. Repetition of “do you not know?” (3, 5, 9) forms the center of Paul’s reminder/argument
- c. What is Paul’s primary concern in this section? Sex? Or something else?
- d. Why does Paul bring in the parable of food and stomach?
- e. When Paul uses “body” does he mean the individual person or the metaphor of the church?
- f. Why does Paul switch from “body” to “spirit” in verse 17 (“the one joining a prostitute becomes one body with her... the one joining to the Lord becomes one spirit with him”)?
- g. How does Paul intend his audience to understand, “Every other sin a person commits is outside the body...”?
- h. “You were bought with a price” if taken literally would imply some kind of ransom (the ransom theory of atonement). Is this what Paul has in mind?

<sup>2</sup> Alternately, this phrase can be properly be part of the preceding question; i.e., “Or do you not know... you are not your own?”

#### 4. Background Information

- a. "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food" was a typical Greek way of arguing by analogy that the body was for sex and sex for the body.<sup>3</sup>
- b. Prostitution was considered a business like any other, disreputable as the occupation was thought to be (for prostitutes, not for the men who had sex with them). It was readily available in inns and taverns, and the ranks of prostitutes were especially stocked with slave girls raised from the vast number of abandoned babies. Jews strongly opposed prostitution (although a few engaged in it), and Philo said that it was a capital offense in God's sight; but this Jewish view was hardly the pagan position. Some pagans even considered prostitution a useful deterrent to adultery.<sup>4</sup>
- c. In Greece there were several types of prostitutes: (a) the *pornê* or the lowest class of prostitute (in the sixth century bc, Solon had established houses of prostitution for such women in Athens [Plutarch "Life of Solon" 22- 23]); (b) the higher class of courtesan, euphemistically called "companion" (*hetaira*); and (c) the true religious prostitute (*hierodulê*) such as the one thousand devotees of Aphrodite in Corinth before the destruction of the city in 146 bc. The sexual latitude allowed to men by Greek public opinion was virtually unrestricted. Sexual relations of males with both boys and harlots were generally tolerated. By the New Testament period, however, there were Stoics (e. g., Musonius Rufus) who had come to regard all sexual intercourse outside marriage as unlawful.

The Romans considered prostitution a trade. Prostitutes were required to register themselves in the office of the aedile (Tacitus Annals 2. 85), with resulting supervision and protection by the state. Even moralists like Cicero and Cato condoned prostitution as necessary to protect and preserve marriage... In general, however, Romans felt more shame about visiting prostitutes than did the Greeks...

The early fathers did not uniformly proscribe prostitution. Augustine, for example, continued the Roman position when he said, "Suppress prostitution and capricious lusts will overthrow society" (*De Ordine* 2. 4. 12).<sup>5</sup>

- d. The language Paul uses is vivid and would have been familiar to the Corinthians, who were accustomed to the purchasing of slaves in the marketplaces. Today we are unfamiliar with this practice, but the idea is simple. Slaves were bought and sold, and in the purchase they came under the absolute authority of the one who paid the price for them.<sup>6</sup>
- e. An option for a slave in the first century was for him/her to slowly build up funds in an account in a local temple until her own price in the slave market was accumulated. He would then be "bought with a price" from his master by the priests of the temple and would formally become that god's slave. Actually, he would be a free man.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *IVP Bible Background Commentary, New Testament*, entry for 1 Cor. 6:13-14.

<sup>4</sup> *BBCNT*, entry for 1 Cor. 6:15-16.

<sup>5</sup> *Reading the New Testament, 1 Corinthians*, entry for 1 Cor. 6:15.

<sup>6</sup> *Understanding the Bible Commentary, 1 Corinthians*, entry for 1 Cor. 6:20.

<sup>7</sup> Bailey, location 2157.

## 5. Segments 1 & 2

### a. Corinthians accepted Greek dualism and reasoning

- i. Stoics and, later, Gnostics argued that body and spirit were two separate and distinct entities. What happened in one did not influence the other. Since the body was evil and would be destroyed, they were free to do whatever they wanted in the body.
- ii. The spirit was immortal and was the only important component
- iii. Their argument: the stomach feels hunger; therefore, it must be sated by food. The body feels desire for sexual fulfillment; therefore, it must be sated by sexual activity.

In either case there is a physical hunger or thirst and physical objects to satisfy the need. In both cases, the act of satisfying a physical appetite with a physical object is morally and religiously neutral (cf. 1 Cor 8:8). This is possibly another misunderstanding of a Pauline position (e. g., Rom 14:17). The basis for this contention is that both the appetite (be it hunger, thirst, or sexual desire) and its physical satisfaction (be it food, drink, or another human body) belong to this age that is passing away. Neither is anything more than a temporal, transient reality; neither is of the essence of the kingdom of God.<sup>8</sup>

"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."<sup>9</sup>

### b. Paul argues otherwise

- i. He approaches the body from the Jewish perspective: the body encompasses the whole person. There is no separate "spirit" component. The body is good. Sin has tarnished it, and God will redeem it.
- ii. The argument that extends the stomach/food analogy to body/sex is illogical.
  1. Yes, stomach and food will be destroyed, but the body will not.
  2. The body is not destined for destruction, but for resurrection.
  3. It is body/Lord rather than body/sex<sup>10</sup>
- iii. Proof: Jesus was resurrected in a physical body

This affirmation stands in bold contrast to the Corinthian view of spirituality, which 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."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *RNT*, entry on 1 Cor. 6:12-14.

<sup>9</sup> *NICNT*, entry on 1 Cor. 6:13-14.

<sup>10</sup> But if this pairing is taken to its logical end, as is, it might appear to disallow marriage.

<sup>11</sup> *NICNT*, entry on 1 Cor. 6:13-14.

c. What principles is Paul postulating?<sup>12</sup>

- i. Not sexual immorality or prostitution, per se, but what they represent. To wit, “Paul is objecting to the *dehumanizing* of sex that takes place when it is turned into a form of entertainment and made parallel to food.”<sup>13</sup>
  1. Arrogance and power, the misuse of liberty: the use and abuse of people as objects, rather than relating to one another as members (or potential members) of God’s eternal family.
- ii. The individual, physical body is clearly the primary intent of the use “body” but the metaphor of “body” as the church is also in the background – the phrase “and the Lord for the body”
  1. Some commentaries (such as *NICNT* [Gordon Fee]) dismiss any possibility of the metaphorical use
  2. Other commentaries (such as *UBC*) assume metaphorical use only
  3. Bailey takes the position of physical as primary, but with an underlying secondary, metaphorical understanding
- iii. What one does in the body, in this life, has effects on the body after the resurrection

Human sexuality, [Paul] affirms, is part of the inner core of the whole person called *the body*, and that body will be raised. Furthermore, that whole person (the body) will be affected negatively by immorality.<sup>14</sup>

1. But won’t resurrected bodies be free from all defects, internal and external?

One beam of biblical light on this issue is the fact that Jesus’ resurrection body was most certainly a new glorious body. Yet he had scars on his hands and in his side. Paul seems to be saying, “Don’t scar up *your own body*—it does with you!”<sup>15</sup>

2. What the above does is challenge us to think about what the resurrection and re-creation/restoration does and doesn’t mean.

6. Segments 2 & 10

- a. Sacred freedom—not absolute individual liberty, but the freedom to bring honor to the purchaser and new community to which he belongs
- b. Paul uses the metaphor of sacrificial manumission<sup>16</sup> to illustrate a small part of what Christ’s atonement accomplished. Metaphor should not be pressed beyond its intent; i.e., the Ransom Theory where God “paid” someone (Who? Satan? Himself? The Law?) in order to free people from sin.
- c. Paul brings together the cross and resurrection to provide the theological framework that informs Christian sexual ethics
  - i. Sexual practice in the body carries over to the resurrection
  - ii. Responsibility to bring honor to the Lord, because he has bought us with a price

7. Segments 3 & 9

- a. Each begins with “Do you not know”
- b. Second line in 3 (your bodies – plural); in 9 (your body – singular)

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<sup>12</sup> Nice alliteration, eh?

<sup>13</sup> Bailey, loc. 2135.

<sup>14</sup> Bailey, loc. 2144.

<sup>15</sup> Bailey, loc. 2148.

<sup>16</sup> See notes 6 and 7.

- c. 3 – Members of Christ
  - i. Individual believers are members of Christ (the church)
  - ii. “Christ” could be used to refer to an individual (Jesus) or the Church<sup>17</sup>
  - iii. In this section (6:13-20) then, “body” primarily refers to the individual. Paul’s use of “Christ” unambiguously refers to the community of believers, the Church.
- d. 9 – Holy Spirit from God, indwells an individual believer (temple/sanctuary)

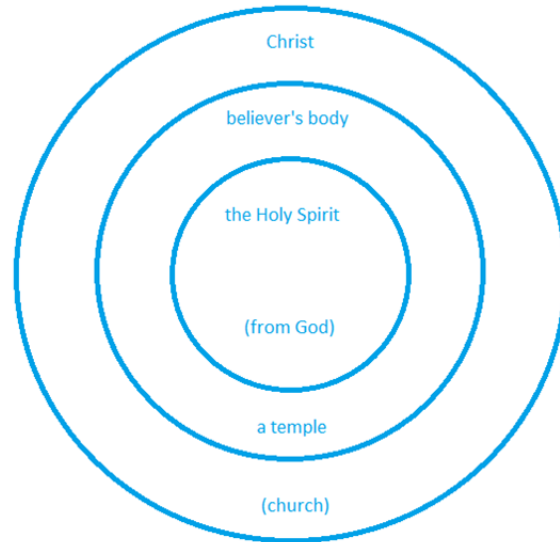


Figure 1: Adapted from Bailey, location 2191

- i. The believer in relation to the Trinity

This is a pointed rejection of Epicurean and Stoic thought where the Spirit (of God) unites only with the soul while the body is part of the brutes.<sup>18</sup>

- ii. The body is not evil, as in some Greek thought, but becomes united with God. Therefore, what one does with and in the body matters spiritually.

- e. Eschatological considerations

- i. From previous set of verses – future – unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God
- ii. Here – future – God will raise us (bodies) up
- iii. Here – past – God raised the Lord and believers were bought with a price
- iv. Here – present – believers (bodies) are members of Christ
- v. Principle: in the present time, the bodies of believers already belong to Christ (i.e., to Jesus, yes, but just as significantly, to the greater community of believers)
  - 1. Individual responsibility to community and to greater society

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 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

<sup>17</sup> RNT, entry on 1 Cor. 6:15.

<sup>18</sup> Bailey, location 2195.

opposite: The presence of the Spirit in their present bodily existence is God's affirmation of the body.<sup>19</sup>

## 8. Segments 4 & 8

- a. Present reality: physical bodies of Christians are *already* joined to Christ
- b. For believers to be joined to a prostitute is an impossibility; it can only be done by violently dismembering a part from Christ (and so would no longer really be a believer) – thus the horror with which Paul writes segment 4
  - i. Paul is primarily concerned with the poor theology of the Corinthians that has led to dishonoring and shameful practices
  - ii. Paul is NOT saying believers should abstain from sexually immoral behaviors because such practices are bad, evil, and sinful
  - iii. Paul IS SAYING believers *cannot* participate in sexual immorality because their (the believers') very nature of being in Christ precludes such practices
- c. Flee from immorality...
  - i. Similar word found in 14:1, "Pursue (run toward) love..."
  - ii. With the idea that Paul is foreshadowing the *hymn of love*, Paul places sexual immorality (prostitution) as opposed to love
- d. Difficulty of verse 18 – sin outside the body vs. against own body
  - i. Objection: there are many "sins" that cause self-harm...
  - ii. Reminder: For Paul "body" is the entire being destined for resurrection. Specific physical body parts, on the other hand, will be destroyed.
  - iii. Reminder: The "body" – not individual physical body parts – is joined to Christ
  - iv. Paul is NOT writing about self-harm behaviors (drunkenness, gluttony, suicide)

[Paul's] 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)... Thus the unique nature of sexual sin is not so much that one sins against one's own self, but against one's own body as viewed in terms of its place in redemptive history.<sup>20</sup>

## 9. Segments 5 – 6 – 7

- a. Biology may state that sex only involves physical body parts. Theology states that a sexual act involves the whole body, and in fact creates a new union.
- b. Paul carefully chooses his words in these texts
  - i. "Becomes one body" ... "becomes one spirit"
    - 1. Paul does not use "body" in the second because if he did, he would agree with the ascetics and condemn all sex as contrary to union with Christ
    - 2. So there is sexual activity that Christians can engage in. What does sex in harmony with the gospel look like? (This is a topic that concludes the second essay, 7:1-40)
  - ii. Paul navigates polar errors of "all sex is fine" and "all sex is evil"

<sup>19</sup> NICNT, entry for 1 Cor. 6:19-20.

<sup>20</sup> NICNT, entry for 1 Cor. 6:18.



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.<sup>21</sup>

10. What are the points Paul is trying to make?

- a. It's about sex, and it isn't – Immorality continues as the visible symptom of a deeper issue
- b. Theological errors lead to unethical behavior
  - i. Error: Over-realized eschatology
    - 1. They have the Spirit so they can do no wrong
    - 2. The kingdom is already here in full so anything goes
  - ii. Error: Greek dualistic philosophy
    - 1. The body is evil and will be destroyed, so what happens in the body doesn't matter
    - 2. The spirit is immortal so what happens in the body cannot affect it
  - iii. Error: Misinterpretation of freedom in Christ
    - 1. Elimination of restrictions – anything goes
    - 2. No laws, no responsibilities
  - iv. Results: arrogance, irresponsibility, immorality, reducing people to mere objects whose existence is to satisfy one's appetites and wants (use and abuse of others), bringing shame upon the community
- c. Correct theology
  - i. Christ's resurrection is proof that the body represents the wholeness of each person and that the body is good. The body continues from this life to the next.
  - ii. Each believer becomes a part of Christ, and through him, becomes interwoven with the Trinity. A person's body is not his own to do with as he pleases.
  - iii. Christian eschatology includes past, present, and future fulfillments. God has freed us from the power of sin; we are members of Christ; we will be resurrected into a glorified body.
- d. Main point: For Christians, all activity done in the present life, including sexual ones, must honor and respect others. Doing so brings honor and glory to God.

... 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.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *NICNT*, entry for 1 Cor. 6:16-17.

<sup>22</sup> *NICNT*, entry for 1 Cor. 6:19-20.