

**5:9–11** In **5:9** Paul refers to a previous letter in which he instructed the Corinthians not to associate with “sexually immoral people.”<sup>64</sup> He then clarifies his intent that he did not at all mean to disconnect from the immoral people of the world but rather with “anyone who calls himself a brother,” who engages in profane behavior (**5:10–11**). The reference to the previous letter reinforces the question of **5:6b**, “Don’t you know?”<sup>65</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Here the Greek term is πόρνος, a cognate term to πορνεία used in **5:1**.

<sup>65</sup> Is Paul correcting a previous misunderstanding or simply reminding them, with further clarification, what they already know? Most commentators assume that Paul’s first letter was ambiguous. But is it plausible that the Corinthians do not associate with the immoral of the world yet they tolerate the most egregious of sins in their own community? The content of the letter suggests that they are not doing so well with “separation from the world.” Ciampa and Rosner (*First Corinthians*, 216) comment, “The Corinthians had taken Paul to mean disassociation from all immoral people, both inside and outside the church, and, it seems, concluded that such teaching was too harsh and impractical; they had no intention of cutting off all ties with those outside the church.” In my view, Paul merely expands on his previous instruction in

The Greek term translated by the **NIV** as “to associate” (also **5:11**) is a double compound verb meaning “to mix up together.”<sup>66</sup> The term occurs elsewhere only in **2 Thess 3:14** as a directive of dissociation.<sup>67</sup> The same idea is present in **Titus 3:10–11**. These texts raise important questions concerning how believers are to draw appropriate boundaries with respect to unbelievers “in the world,” and

order to clarify, not to clear up a misunderstanding. The **NIV** switches from past tense to present on the same verb in **5:9** (“I have written”) and **5:11** (“Now I am writing you”), interpreting the second occurrence as an epistolary aorist, that is, writing in the present but from the viewpoint of the recipient. In both instances the verb is in the aorist, ἔγραψα. I think the **NASB** has it right in **5:11**, “But actually, I wrote to you ...” In both instances (**5:9** and **11**) Paul refers to his previous letter. **BDAG** places **1 Cor 5:11** under the definition, “temporal marker with focus not so much on the present time as the situation pertains at a given moment, *now, as it is.*”

<sup>66</sup> Gk. συναναμίγνυμι. Garland (*1 Corinthians*, 185) adds that, in the context of purity boundaries, the term means to set apart by virtue of strict moral standards.

<sup>67</sup> Paul follows in **2 Thess 3:15**, “Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.”

to believers living in open rebellion. Paul is clear, for example, in this section, that dissociation from believers is required in certain situations. The same holds true with respect to unbelievers under certain circumstances, such as participating in the worship of idols (10:14–22). However, complete withdrawal from the world is impossible.<sup>68</sup> For this reason, believers need a good measure of wisdom.<sup>69</sup> Paul works out the believer’s decision-making process in these matters in more detail in chaps. 8–10 on the question of food sacrificed to idols. Here, the point is simple;

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Phil 2:14–16, “Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing.”

<sup>69</sup> Morris (1 Corinthians, 89) comments, “When we reflect that Jesus ate with sinners and that Paul regards it as permissible to accept invitations to eat in heathen homes (10:27), the detailed application of this injunction is not easy. But the principle is plain. Where anyone claims to be Christian but leads a life that belies his profession, there is to be no such close fellowship as will countenance his sin.”

they should dissociate themselves from anyone who professes to be a Christian who openly flouts Christian standards,<sup>70</sup> but they should not disengage from the immoral people of the world. Contact with the world is essential to evangelism.<sup>71</sup>

In 5:11 Paul clarifies the nature of with-

<sup>70</sup> Paul lists five categories of people other than “the sexually immoral”: the greedy, idolator, slanderer, drunkard, and thief (NIV, “greedy” and “swindlers,” governed by one definite article, refer to the same thing). The sexual sinner is not the only one subject to church discipline. Garland (1 Corinthians, 189) notes how the sins listed fit the epistolary situation: the fornicator applies to the case of incest (5:1) and other passages (chaps. 6–7), the greedy and the swindler apply to the Christians suing in pagan court (6:1–11), idolatry is the focus of 8–10, the reviler causes dissensions (1:18–4:21), and the problem of drunkenness shows up at the Lord’s supper in 11:21. See also P. Zaas, “Catalogues and Context: 1 Corinthians 5 and 6,” NTS 34 (1988): 623–24. B. Rosner notes a connection with the vice list and sins connected to the command to expel the offender in Deuteronomy (Paul, Scripture, and Ethics, 68–70). See also also Ciampa and Rosner, First Corinthians, 217 for a chart laying out the parallels.

<sup>71</sup> See esp. 9:19–23.

drawal from the professed believer who is immoral, “With such a man do not even eat.” What may seem like a strange command to the modern reader was a more serious issue in the ancient world, where refusing to eat with someone broke all social ties. But what does Paul mean in this context, since the excluded professing believer presumably would be treated as an unbeliever and therefore as one to be won back to the Lord? Paul likely means exclusion from the Lord’s Supper, not complete exclusion from private meals.<sup>72</sup> Fee thinks that Paul’s concern is not that individual members disassociate from the incestuous man, but rather that he is excluded from the community as it gathers for worship and instruction.<sup>73</sup> How can the church strike a balance between narrow exclusivism and a community that welcomes sinners as a

<sup>72</sup> Ciampa and Rosner (*First Corinthians*, 218) note that the Lord’s Supper and other fellowship meals are intended, but it is “less certain that the church as individuals is to refuse to eat with them ... However, the case of the incestuous man may be more serious ... and the words ‘not even’ point to private meals also.” See also [Titus 3:10](#), “Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him.”

<sup>73</sup> Fee, *First Corinthians*, 226.

place for healing? Garland notes that the context “refers to a glaring sin that is very public and brings disgrace on the community. There is a limit beyond which patience, toleration, and charity toward another’s sin ceases to be a virtue.”<sup>74</sup> Fee suggests that Paul is speaking about persistent sins, not those who simply struggle with past sins.<sup>75</sup>

**5:12–13** Paul concludes with a final injunction to expel the wicked man from the community ([5:13](#)). In doing so, he contrasts the judgment of “insiders” and “outsiders.”<sup>76</sup> Paul has no say in what unbelievers do, only believers. It is not the business of believers to judge the outsiders, but they must judge the insiders. In this context, however, the judgment has to do with the disciplinary action of the church and not to prophetic judgment of society.<sup>77</sup> The judgment of the incestuous man rests with the entire community, not only with the apostle Paul. Paul’s final command, “Expel the wicked man from among you,” picks up a recurring phrase in Deuteronomy,<sup>78</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 190.

<sup>75</sup> Fee, *First Corinthians*, 224.

<sup>76</sup> On the designation, “outsiders,” see [Col 4:5](#); [1 Thess 4:12](#); and [1 Tim 3:7](#).

<sup>77</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 190.

<sup>78</sup> [Deut 17:7, 12; 19:19; 21:21; 22:21–22, 24; 24:7](#).

although without the typical introductory formula, “It is written,” perhaps because of the emotionally charged tenor of the instruction.<sup>79</sup> This final command is the capstone of Paul’s argument (see 5:2, 5, 7) and is essential not only for the individual but also for the church. The emphasis on individual repentance and restoration is correct, but equally so, the church must exercise wise discipline in the preservation of her own purity. The effects of egregious, public sin on both the individual and the corporate body are profound.

## 2. The Shame of the Righteous Taking Disputes Before the Unrighteous (6:1–11)

**<sup>1</sup> If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? <sup>2</sup> 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? <sup>3</sup> Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! <sup>4</sup> Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church! <sup>5</sup> say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? <sup>6</sup> But instead,**

<sup>79</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *First Corinthians*, 220.

**one brother goes to law against another—and this in front of unbelievers!**

**<sup>7</sup> 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? <sup>8</sup> Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers.**

**<sup>9</sup> 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 <sup>10</sup> nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup> 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.**

The topic shifts in 6:1 from the case of an incestuous man to another glaring problem in the Corinthian assembly, namely, litigation among believers in the secular civil courts.<sup>80</sup> The recurring

<sup>80</sup> The language of judgment pervades chaps. 5–6 with nine occurrences of the Greek word “to judge” (κρίνω) evenly distributed (see 1 Cor 5:3, 12–13; 6:1–3; 6:6) Additionally, the term κριτήριο (NASB, “law court”) appears in 6:2 and 6:4. The theme of the “unrighteous” pervades 6:1–9 (note the uses of ἄδικος or ἀδικέω in 6:1, 7, 8, 9), which stands in contrast

theme of judgment between 5:1–13 and 6:1–11 has led some to argue that the wrongdoing in 6:1–11 is an extension of chap. 5, that the subject of disputes in the civil courts relates to some sexual impropriety.<sup>81</sup> But such a line of reasoning is to their “righteous” status before God in 6:11 (δικαιόω).

<sup>81</sup> See J. H. Bernard, “The Connexion Between the Fifth and Sixth Chapters of 1 Cor.,” *ExpTim* 7 (1907): 433–43. More recently P. Richardson, “Judgment in Sexual Matters in 1 Corinthians 6:1–11,” *NovT* 25 (1983): 37–58; R. A. Horsely, *1 Corinthians*, ANTC (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 86. Garland (*1 Corinthians*, 198–99) gives four reasons why this interpretation is unlikely: (1) Paul is citing cases of appalling moral failures in order to curb unwarranted Corinthian boasting and arrogance. The fact that 6:1–11 is sandwiched between cases of sexual immorality does not necessarily mean that the lawsuit in 6:1–11 has something to do with sexual immorality. (2) Paul’s insistence in 6:7 that they should be willing to be wronged does not seem applicable to a case of adultery, let alone incest. (3) Paul would not dismiss incest as a minor dispute (6:2). Garland notes Winter’s study on the different kinds of cases handled by the civil and criminal courts. See B. W. Winter, “Civil Litigation in Secular Corinth and the Church: The Forensic Background to 1 Cor 6:1–8,” *NTS* 37 (1991): 561.

unnecessary in order to establish a coherent line of reasoning between the two sections. Paul’s remarks in 5:12–13 regarding judging those “inside” versus those “outside” provide the necessary link. Paul concludes his argument in chap. 5 with the admonition to render judgment against an “insider” by expelling the wicked person from among them. Thus it follows that if believers are obligated to render judgments among themselves within the community then they also bear responsibility to settle other matters of dispute within the community before “the saints” instead of in the secular arena before the “unrighteous.”<sup>82</sup> The Corinthians should expel the incestuous man, but they also are competent to settle other matters among themselves. Therefore, one believer taking another believer to court is yet another appalling moral collapse that disparages the church’s witness before the world and demonstrates their failure to function properly as the people

<sup>82</sup> So also Fee (*First Corinthians*, 228), who explains that Corinthian judgments “had to do first of all with the expulsion of the incestuous man; but it also has to do with another kind of ‘judgment’ that must take place within the Christian community, namely in matters of everyday life where one member has a grievance against another.”

of God. As in 5:1–13, Paul has more to say about the failure of the church to settle disputes than he does about the actual offenders, and, as in previous sections of the letter, Paul constructs his argument within an eschatological framework (cf. 3:13–15; 4:1–13; 5:1–5).

In 6:2–4, Paul takes the notion of judgment a step further than he does in 5:1–13 in the assertion that believers will take part in the end-time judgment of the world and of angels. This does not stand in contradiction to what he has written in 5:12–13 regarding judging those outside the church. As Barrett points out, “The explanation is that 5:12 refers to a censorious kind of criticism practiced by church members in the present, whereas 6:2 refers to participation of the people of God in the judgment at the last day.”<sup>83</sup> If believers will participate in something as weighty as the end-time judgment, then how is it that they cannot judge everyday matters pertaining to this life? Is there not one wise person among them to carry out the task (6:5)? Fee comments that “The whole scene fills Paul with indignation, so much so that there is scarcely any argument at all.”<sup>84</sup> The most recent criti-

cal editions of the Greek New Testament punctuate 6:1–11 with no less than ten questions.<sup>85</sup> The question “Do you not know?” occurs three times in 6:1–11 and an additional three times in 6:12–20. The first word in Greek is “to dare,”<sup>86</sup> thus, with no connecting conjunction or particle to the preceding section, Paul abruptly moves to this topic with strong rebuke, “How dare you!”<sup>87</sup>

(6:1, 6), rhetorical questions (6:2–4, 5b–6, 7b), sarcasm (6:5), and threat (6:8–11).

<sup>85</sup> Whether 6:4 is an indicative or interrogative statement is debated. See discussion below.

<sup>86</sup> τολμάω. The term can also mean “to be bold” (see 2 Cor 10:2, 12; 11:21; Phil 1:14).

<sup>87</sup> Thiselton (*First Corinthians*, 419–22) notes that the local situation in Corinth is a major factor in the reading of this passage since Paul is favorable to the role of civil authorities in rendering justice in Rom 13:1–7, which enjoins believers to obey them. He suggests that while the criminal courts of the Roman system would provide some relative justice, the local civil courts were another matter, often swayed and manipulated through the social networks of the powerful and influential leaving the poor and weak with no grounds for justice. See also A. C. Mitchell, “Rich and Poor in the Courts of Corinth: Litigiousness and Status in 1 Cor 6:1–11,” *NTS* 39 (1993): 562–86; Winter, “Civil Litigation in

<sup>83</sup> Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 136.

<sup>84</sup> Fee, *First Corinthians*, 229. Fee notes that Paul alternates between statements of horror

Paul’s argument in 6:1–11 is threefold. First, Paul expresses shock and outrage and reprimands them for behavior not fitting the people of God who will one day judge the world and angels and for taking matters of this life before the secular courts (6:1–6).<sup>88</sup> Second, Paul explains that the very presence of lawsuits among believers is a moral defeat for all involved. Nobody wins in this situation (6:7–8). Third, Paul issues a final reason for his rebuke accompanied by a strong warning (6:9–11). The “unjust” will not inherit the kingdom of God. On what basis should a believer take a matter before someone who has no inheritance in the kingdom of God? Furthermore, the Corinthian believers are no longer “unjust” because they have been “washed, sanctified, and

Secular Corinth and the Church: The Forensic Background to 1 Cor 6:1–8.” Regarding Jewish practice, in Acts 18:12–18, when the Jews brought Paul before Gallio in Corinth, Gallio deferred the matter back to the Jews, “‘But since it involves questions about words and names and your own law—settle the matter yourselves. I will not be a judge of such things.’ So he had them ejected from the court” (Acts 18:15–16).

<sup>88</sup> This first unit is marked by an *inclusio* at 6:1 and 6:6, “before the unrighteous”/“before the unbelievers.”

justified.” Again, the indicative of what they “are” lays the foundation of how they must behave.

6:1 As noted above, the Greek verb translated “dare” occurs first in the sentence for emphasis. As in 5:1, Paul expresses shock and indignation over their behavior toward one another. They were unwilling to properly exercise judgment in the case of blatant immorality that would destroy the fabric of their existence as God’s holy people, yet they resolved to settle grievances against one another in public courts before unbelievers. The NIV’s “If any of you has a dispute with another” translates a Greek idiom for civil litigation.<sup>89</sup> We do not know if this is an isolated lawsuit or if this was a Corinthian practice.<sup>90</sup> Either way, the concern is their unrighteousness before God and the world. Their actions damaged their witness to the world and

<sup>89</sup> Gk. πράγμα ἔχων πρὸς τὸν ἕτερον. Literally, “Having a matter against another.” BDAG, “Having a lawsuit with someone.”

<sup>90</sup> Robertson and Plummer (*First Corinthians*, 110), noting the plural in 6:8, think that Paul has no isolated case in mind, unlike the situation in 5:1–13. Garland (*1 Corinthians*, 195), on the other hand thinks that, given the numbers in the church, it is probable that there was only one case.

demonstrated a failure to exercise the wisdom of God, which is far greater than the wisdom of this world.

Paul's outrage has to do not with the fact of grievances but with the taking of a grievance before the "ungodly" and not before the "saints." Some translations render "ungodly" as "unrighteous." Barrett contends that this is an unfortunate translation, that Paul's use of the term is religious rather than a moral appraisal of the secular judges. In other words, the term simply designates the secular magistrates as "unbelievers."<sup>91</sup> They, unlike the Corinthians, have not been justified and are not rightly related to God in Christ. Paul did not intend to demean the court system as unjust.<sup>92</sup> Paul's choice may be explained by the eschatological framing of the argument. The "unrighteous," in contrast to the "saints," will not inherit the kingdom of God (6:11–12).<sup>93</sup> Garland

<sup>91</sup> Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 135. Note the parallel in 6:6 where the term "unbelievers" (ἀπίστων) is used. Barrett prefers "non-Christians and Christians."

<sup>92</sup> Robertson and Plummer (*First Corinthians*, 110) also note that the term does not necessarily impugn the justice of the Roman court system. The term simply reflects the world to which the judges belong.

<sup>93</sup> So Fee, *First Corinthians*, 232.

thinks otherwise. He suggests that since Paul does not continue with the "outsider" language of 5:12–13, but rather calls them the "unjust," he does more than simply call them "unbelievers." "In the context, which refers to these persons serving as the judges in a dispute, this term would seem to offer a moral appraisal of them."<sup>94</sup> Paul's exhortation for the Corinthians to settle their disputes before the saints reflects his Jewish heritage, but his reasons will be new (6:2).<sup>95</sup>

6:2–3 For the third time in the letter Paul asks, "Do you not know?" The first basic premise of his argument is that eschatological realities should determine present behavior. There is no elaboration on the phrase "the saints will judge the world," but the point is clear. If saints will be involved in the end-time judgment of the world and angels, then they are fully

<sup>94</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 195–96. Garland (196) comments, "The judicial context and the meaning of the term in Rom 3:5 and 1 Cor 6:9 strongly suggest that Paul intends to deprecate the moral capacity and judicial fairness of these unbelievers before whom one Christian has brought another brother Christian to be judged." Garland notes as a parallel the "unjust" judge in Luke 18:2–6 who neither feared God nor respected persons.

<sup>95</sup> Fee, *First Corinthians*, 231.

competent to handle matters pertaining to the affairs of this age.<sup>96</sup> In other words, Paul argues from the greater to the lesser.<sup>97</sup> Commentators routinely recognize [Dan 7:22](#) as a possible background to the concept of saints judging the world.<sup>98</sup> Paul steps it up a notch in [6:3](#), once again asking, “Do you not know?” This time he includes the judgment of angels. The contrast is striking. If you will judge angels,<sup>99</sup> then how much more are you

<sup>96</sup> [NIV](#), “Are you not competent to judge trivial cases?” [NASB](#), “Are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts?” Robertson and Plummer (*First Corinthians*, 112) suggest, “Are you unworthy of the smallest tribunals?”

<sup>97</sup> For the reverse argument, from the “lesser to the greater,” see [9:11](#).

<sup>98</sup> See also [Wisdom 3:7](#); [1 Enoch 1:9](#); [38](#). In the New Testament see [Matt 19:28](#); [Luke 22:30](#); [Rev 20:4](#).

<sup>99</sup> Paul does not elaborate on “judging the angels.” For an argument for fallen angels, see P. M. Hoskins, “The Use of Biblical and Extra-biblical Parallels in the Interpretation of [First Corinthians 6:2–3](#),” [CBQ](#) 63 (2001): 287–97. Paul’s purpose here is not doctrinal but rather to point out present inconsistencies. Garland ([1 Corinthians](#), 203) comments, “It is probable that he wishes only to remind the Corinthians of their end-time destiny when they will be given dominion even over the angels. In that

competent to judge matters pertaining to this life?<sup>100</sup>

[6:4–6](#) Whether we take the main verb in [6:4](#) as indicative or imperative<sup>101</sup> is a well-known interpretive crux. One can see the differences by comparing modern translations. The [NIV](#), for example, takes it as an imperative: “Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church!”<sup>102</sup> The meaning would be that the least esteemed among them are competent to settle their disputes. The phrase “men of little account” is based on the same term used in [1:28](#), translated as the “despised things,”<sup>103</sup> chosen by God in order to contradict the wisdom of the world. In the context of [6:1–11](#), with its eschatological overtones,

day, the current state of affairs will be radically reversed.”

<sup>100</sup> The Greek μήτι γε strengthens the construction. [BDAG](#), “not to mention, let alone.” See also Robertson and Plummer, *First Corinthians*, 113.

<sup>101</sup> The second person plural form, καθίζετε, which occurs last in the sentence, can be either indicative or imperative.

<sup>102</sup> So also [KJV](#).

<sup>103</sup> Gk. ἐξουθενέω. The term occurs elsewhere in Paul in [Rom 14:3](#), [10](#); [1 Cor 16:11](#); [2 Cor 10:10](#); [Gal 4:14](#); [1 Thess 5:20](#).

it is just possible that Paul is playing on these ironies. God has chosen the “despised” all right, and those who are the least esteemed in the church are fully competent to handle matters pertaining to this life. Sometimes the greatest wisdom lies with those who are, from the world’s point of view, the least powerful, influential, and educated. Kinman notes that while most modern commentators read as an indicative, most ancient commentators opted for the imperative. He sets forth grammatical, literary, and historical arguments for the imperatival translation.<sup>104</sup> This interpretation is fol-

<sup>104</sup> B. Kinman, “‘Appoint the Despised as Judges!’ (1 Corinthians 6:4),” *TynBul* 48 (1997): 345–54. Kinman argues that there is precedent in Paul’s writings for the placement of the imperative as the last element in the sentence (citing [Rom 12:14](#); [1 Cor 4:6](#); [7:21](#); [10:31](#); [11:33](#); [14:20](#); [16:1](#), [13](#); [Gal 5:1](#); [Eph 5:11](#); [Phil 4:4](#); [Col 3:15](#); [1 Thess 5:22](#); [1 Tim 4:11](#); [5:22](#); [6:2](#); and [Phlm 18](#)). Furthermore, the Corinthian church could not “appoint” judges in secular courts, and the phrase “in the church” in all other instances in Paul carries a locative sense rather than instrumental, “by the church.” Paul refers not to what has already transpired but what might hypothetically happen in the future. His solution is to “appoint those despised in the church as arbiters” (353). The

lowed most recently by Garland<sup>105</sup> and Ciampa and Rosner.<sup>106</sup>

The TNIV represents another possible reading of the sentence, which renders the verb as indicative and the sentence as a question, “Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, do you ask for a ruling from those whose way of life is scorned in the church?”<sup>107</sup> In other words, following on the heels of the previous questions in [6:2–3](#), this is yet another probing question that would have the rhetorical effect of bringing them back to their senses. Paul asks, “Do you actually submit judgments before men who count for nothing in the church at all?” Fee is representative of those who believe this is the best way to read the text, noting that the two preceding eschatological arguments favor this view. This would not mean that Paul necessarily trivializes the pagan courts, but rather that

social status of these members of the church would have stood in stark contrast to those typically involved in litigation (the wise and the influential and those of noble birth; [1:26](#)).

<sup>105</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 205–7.

<sup>106</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *First Corinthians*, 229–30.

<sup>107</sup> So also the critical editions of the Greek New Testament, RSV, NRSV, HCSB, NASB, and NET. Also NIV2011.

Mark Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, vol. 28, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2014).

“they are those people whose values and judgments the church has rejected by its adoption of totally different standards.”<sup>108</sup> It is difficult to decide between the two views; both sides have good arguments. Robertson and Plummer counsel, “We must be content to leave the matter open.”<sup>109</sup>

In 6:5, unlike 4:14 where he claimed his intent was to warn rather than shame, Paul says exactly the opposite, “I say this to shame you,”<sup>110</sup> followed by the added sarcasm, “Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers?”<sup>111</sup> Once again, the Corinthians’ actions betray their claim to be truly wise. Paul’s rebuke sharply undermines their boasting. The strong adversative in Greek sets 6:6 in stark contrast to the question of 6:5.<sup>112</sup> Instead of wisdom prevailing with at least one wise judge in the community, brother is being judged by brother before the

<sup>108</sup> Fee, *First Corinthians*, 235–36.

<sup>109</sup> Robertson and Plummer, *First Corinthians*, 114.

<sup>110</sup> See also 15:34.

<sup>111</sup> BDAG indicates that οὐτως in this context is equivalent to our colloquial, “Do you mean to tell me that there is not one person wise enough do settle a dispute between members?”

<sup>112</sup> Gk. ἀλλά.

unbelievers! It is bad to have disputes, but it is worse to go to law with a brother. Worst of all is the tragedy of doing this before the world.<sup>113</sup>

**6:7–8** In litigation, from a worldly point of view, one side wins and the other side loses. However, when one believer takes another believer to civil court over trivial matters, the guaranteed outcome is not only that nobody wins; even before the trial begins “you have been completely defeated already” (NIV).<sup>114</sup> The adverb translated “completely” is the same adverb translated “actually” in 5:1.<sup>115</sup> Robertson and Plummer take the adverb in the sense of “under any circumstance.”<sup>116</sup> BDAG suggests as a possible translation of the phrase, “believe me, it’s an utter disaster.” The defeat is “the very fact that you have lawsuits among you,” that one wise person in the church has not been able to adjudicate the matter (6:5). The parties involved (and the church) have failed to demonstrate the wisdom of God and have instead followed the course of the wisdom of the world. They have failed to live out the

<sup>113</sup> So *ibid.*, 115.

<sup>114</sup> The Greek phrase is ἤδη μὲν [οὖν] ὅλως ἤττημα ὑμῖν ἐστιν.

<sup>115</sup> Gk. ὅλως.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

core principles of the gospel. The teaching of Jesus surely underlies Paul's ethics.<sup>117</sup> Paul asks, "Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?" Instead, by having lawsuits among themselves they are the ones acting unjustly and defrauding their fellow believers.<sup>118</sup>

What Paul says, in essence, is that, even if you have been wronged, you wrong others by taking them to court. It is far better to suffer wrong, to be cheated, than to tarnish the reputation of the gospel before the unbelieving world and to wrong another believer. How believers act in relation to other believers is a major emphasis in chaps. 8–14.<sup>119</sup>

**6:9–11** For the third time in his discus-

<sup>117</sup> Matt 18:15–17; cf. Rom 12:17; 1 Thess 5:15; 1 Pet 2:19–21. See Fee, *First Corinthians*, 241. Garland (*1 Corinthians*, 209–10) notes that while many appeal to the philosophical tradition, what Paul says here is the very core of the gospel.

<sup>118</sup> The Greek includes the emphatic conjunction plus the personal pronoun for emphasis, "But you ..." (ἀλλὰ ὑμεῖς ἀδικεῖτε καὶ ἀποστερεῖτε).

<sup>119</sup> Fee (*First Corinthians*, 241) thinks that the use of the verb ἀποστερέω (to do wrong/defraud) indicates that the issue has to do with some sort of property or business dealings.

sion of lawsuits Paul asks, "Do you not know?" What they should know in this instance is that "the wicked [or "wrongdoers" NIV2011] will not inherit the kingdom of God." Paul follows with a warning of deception and a vice list comparable to 5:10–11. *First Corinthians* 6:10 reiterates that those who are described by the list "will not inherit the kingdom of God." In 6:11 Paul reminds the Corinthians of what they used to be in contrast to what they now are by virtue of their conversion. But how do these three concluding verses relate to the subject of litigation among believers?

The most obvious function of 6:9–11 in Paul's argument is the continuing contrast between believer and unbeliever. Unbelievers will not inherit the kingdom. Believers, on the other hand, have been "washed," "sanctified," and "justified." But there is also a stern warning regarding deception (6:9).<sup>120</sup> That they bring their disputes before the unrighteous is shameful and unwise (6:1, 5). Here, however, Paul raises the stakes even higher.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. 3:18, "Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a 'fool' so that he may become wise." The verb in 6:9 could be passive "Do not be deceived," or middle, "Do not deceive yourselves."

To the previous vice list of six sins in 5:10–11 Paul adds four more.<sup>121</sup> The word translated “wicked” is the same word

<sup>121</sup> The additional vices include three sexual sins (NIV, “adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexual offenders”) and “thieves.” Without question, the most discussed terms in recent times are the terms translated “male prostitutes” (μαλακός) and “homosexual offenders” (ἀρσενικοίτης). The first term is used only here by Paul. It carries the meaning “soft” in its two occurrences in the Gospels (Matt 11:8; Luke 7:25). BDAG defines the occurrence in 1 Cor 6:9 as that “pertaining to being passive in a same-sex relationship, effeminate.” The second term appears only here and in 1 Tim 1:10. Due to the rarity of the term, perhaps with no pre-history before Paul, the exact meaning is debated, but the word likely derives from the language of the LXX of Lev 18:22 and 20:13. NIV2011 translates both terms together with “nor men who have sex with men,” with a note stating that the two Greek words “refer to the passive and active participants in homosexual acts.” For a robust technical discussion on the contemporary homosexuality debate, see Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 440–53. For a full book length discussion, see R. A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001). See also D. O. Via and R. A. J. Gagnon, *Homosexuality and the*

translated “ungodly” in 6:1.<sup>122</sup> The cognate verb occurs in 6:8, “acting unrighteously.”<sup>123</sup> Thus, the wrongdoing of 6:8 takes a wider scope. By engaging in litigation, they themselves are acting unrighteously, just like those who will not inherit the kingdom. Their behavior is no different from the world. Instead of “becoming what they are” the Corinthians are “behaving like they were” (6:11). Paul’s warning is not hypothetical but real. Those who persist in such behavior exclude themselves from the kingdom of God.<sup>124</sup> The kingdom of God consists of righteousness, joy, and peace in the Holy Spirit (Rom 14:17). Believers have been rescued from the dominion of darkness and brought into the kingdom of God’s

*Bible: Two Views* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003). The totality of the witness of Scripture on the issue of homosexuality is clear. Fee (*First Corinthians*, 244) comments, “For Paul’s attitude toward homosexuality in general one need refer only to his own Jewish background with its abhorrence of such, plus his description of such activity (Rom 1:26–27).” Of course, there are other vices enumerated in 1 Cor 6:9–10 to which we must give equal attention.

<sup>122</sup> ἄδικος.

<sup>123</sup> ἀδικέω). HCSB, “You act unjustly.”

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Gal 5:21; Eph 5:5.

Son (Col 1:13).<sup>125</sup> The actions of believers should be worthy of those who belong to the kingdom (1 Thess 2:12).

While the function of 6:11 is to draw out the contrast between the Corinthians and the unrighteous who will not inherit the kingdom and to remind them of their status in Christ, in and of itself the statement is a remarkable testimony to the power of the gospel in conversion. Barrett comments, “Paul is not writing in merely literary or in imaginary terms, but addressing the greatest of miracles, a church of redeemed sinners, won from their old lifestyle by the power of God.”<sup>126</sup> Similarly Morris: “The tremendous revolution brought about by the preaching of the gospel comes out in the quiet words, *And that is what some of you were.*”<sup>127</sup> In Greek there is a threefold repetition of the strong adversative, “but,”<sup>128</sup> not captured in the NIV. This emphatic structure notes the contrast of their present condition and their past “and the consequent

<sup>125</sup> Note that Paul can speak both of the “kingdom of God” and the “kingdom of his Son.”

<sup>126</sup> Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 140–41.

<sup>127</sup> Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 94.

<sup>128</sup> Gk. ἀλλά. See NASB, “but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”

demand which their moral condition makes on them.”<sup>129</sup> There is no theological significance in the sequence of the terms, “washed,” “sanctified,” and “justified” since similar terms appear in reverse order in 1:30.<sup>130</sup> The phrase, “You were washed,” may include the imagery of baptism and its significance.<sup>131</sup> It seems that Paul is speaking of one event using three terms in order to convey his primary concern, namely, the transforming power and renewal of the gospel that occurs by the authority of Jesus and by the Spirit of God. Baptism most certainly depicts this reality.<sup>132</sup>

<sup>129</sup> Robertson and Plummer, *First Corinthians*, 119.

<sup>130</sup> “Righteousness” (δικαιοσύνη) and “holiness” (ἁγιασμός).

<sup>131</sup> Barrett (*First Corinthians*, 141) thinks that Paul has baptism in mind since the formula “in the name of the Lord Jesus” is used, but “through the use of a non-technical word shows that it is the inward meaning rather than the outward circumstance of the rite that is important to Paul.” Fee (*First Corinthians*, 246) agrees that it is possible but not certain that the term “washed” is an allusion to baptism. The verb itself is never used of baptism, but it is joined to it in Acts 22:16, the only other use of the term in the New Testament.

<sup>132</sup> Regarding the trinitarian formulation of

### 3. The Sanctity of the Body (6:12–20)

<sup>12</sup>“Everything is permissible for me”—but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible for me”—but I will not be mastered by anything. <sup>13</sup>“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. <sup>14</sup>By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. <sup>15</sup>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! <sup>16</sup>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.” <sup>17</sup>But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

<sup>18</sup>Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. <sup>19</sup>Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is

6:11, Barrett (*First Corinthians*, 143) comments, “Trinitarian theology, at least in its New Testament form, did not arise out of speculation, but out of the fact that when Christians spoke of what God had done for them and in them they often found themselves obliged to use threefold language of this kind.”

in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; <sup>20</sup>you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

In this unit Paul returns to the topic of sexual immorality.<sup>133</sup> In 5:1–13 Paul addressed a case of incest. In 6:12–20 the main issue is prostitution (6:15–16). The command to flee sexual immorality in 6:18, however, is likely a summative command, taking into account the entire discussion from 5:1–6:20 with all forms of sexual immorality in view. In 7:2 the term *porneia* in the plural refers to the

<sup>133</sup> The shift of topic from lawsuits (6:1–11) to prostitution (6:12–20) is abrupt. There is no linguistic connection (particle, conjunction) linking the two units. There is a thematic connection, however, with 5:1–13 and the mention of *πορνεία* in the vices lists of 5:10–11 and 6:9–10. The topic of *πορνεία* is relevant to the ensuing discussion in chap. 7 (see 7:2), along with the concept of “authority” (6:12; 7:4). Similarly, Thiselton (*First Corinthians*, 458) notes the common link of moral failures from 5:1–6:20. From a literary standpoint, 6:12–20 functions as a transition/hinge passage, relating significantly to what precedes and follows. See Collins (*First Corinthians*, 241–42) for an excellent literary analysis of the thematic connections between 6:12–20 and the letter as a whole.

prevalence of immorality in Corinth.

The primary emphasis of 6:12–20 is stated succinctly in 6:13b, “The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.” As in the previous two sections (5:1–13; 6:1–11) Paul reminds them of things they know, or should know.<sup>134</sup> Here the warning against *porneia* is not cast in terms of exclusion from the kingdom of God, as in 6:9–10, but rather rests on specific claims regarding the believer’s body in relation to the Lord, culminating with the command to “honor God with your body” (6:20). Unlike 5:1–13 and 6:1–11, Paul levels no specific accusation against an individual or individuals in 6:12–20, leading some to question whether or not this passage addresses actual occurrences of Corinthians consorting with prostitutes.<sup>135</sup> If this is the case, then the argument would serve to establish a theologi-

<sup>134</sup> The question, “Do you not know?” occurs in 6:15, 16, 19. The question occurs a total of six times in chap. 6 alone.

<sup>135</sup> See Robertson and Plummer, *First Corinthians*, 121; J. C. Hurd, *The Origin of 1 Corinthians* (New York: Seabury, 1965), 86, 90; B. Byrne, “Sinning Against One’s Own Body: Paul’s Understanding of the Sexual Relationship in 1 Corinthians 6:18,” *CBQ* 45 (1983): 614–15.

cal basis for further discussion on human sexuality in chap. 7.<sup>136</sup> However, even if Paul had no direct report of such aberrant behavior as he did in the case of incest and litigation, the tone of his argument framed as it is with the repeated question, “Do you not know?,” demonstrates a very real and urgent concern.<sup>137</sup>

<sup>136</sup> Collins (*First Corinthians*, 240) explains, “The issue of sexual intercourse with prostitutes was one that several of the philosophical moralists considered in their discussion of the relationship between law and morality. From this perspective it would appear that Paul chose a classic topos on the basis of which he could develop his discussion on sexuality with respect to the very issues the Corinthians had raised in their letter to him (7:1).”

<sup>137</sup> For a discussion of the possible historical scenarios that gave rise to Paul’s instructions, see Ciampa and Rosner (*First Corinthians*, 246–49) who argue for the likelihood of temple prostitution as the background, to be distinguished from sacred prostitution, which bore ritual significance (condoned by the pagan priesthood and for the purpose of fertility). Temple prostitution involved the use of prostitutes associated with festive dinners on the temple precincts (cf. the association of feasting and immorality in Acts 15:20; Rev 2:14). Ciampa and Rosner conclude, “In the end it is not possible to be certain which type

Another major interpretive issue of this passage has to do with the possibility that Paul is responding to Corinthian slogans. Many scholars see clear evidence in 6:12–20 of a two-way conversation between Paul and the Corinthians, meaning that some of the statements are possible expressions of Corinthian viewpoints. The ramifications for interpretation are significant since certain portions of the argument would be either Paul’s assertion or the exact opposite, a Corinthian viewpoint that Paul seeks to correct or to qualify. Smith, in a recent article concerning the methodology of uncovering embedded slogans, defines a Corinthian slogan as “a motto [or similar expression that captures the spirit, purpose, or guiding principles] of a particular group or point of view at Corinth, or at least a motto that Paul was using to represent their position or attitudes.”<sup>138</sup> Scholars debate the

of prostitution Paul opposes in 1 Corinthians 6:12–20” but that “it was common in Jewish texts for idolatry and sexual immorality to be linked, not least because these two vices were considered to be the distinctive marks of the Gentiles” (249).

<sup>138</sup> J. E. Smith, “Slogans in 1 Corinthians,” *BSac* 167 (2010): 82. Smith notes the more precise definition of Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, who describe slogans as Paul’s quotations of

number of possible slogans, their source, what the slogan indicates concerning the belief structure of some in Corinth, and if it is possible through mirror-reading to determine the Corinthian theological error behind the supposed slogan.<sup>139</sup>

The structure of the passage supports the possibility of three slogans occurring at 6:12, 13a, and 18b.<sup>140</sup> The first, “Everything is permissible for me,”<sup>141</sup> occurs twice in 6:12, each time qualified by strong contrast, “but not everything is beneficial” and “but I will not be mastered by anything.” The second (lit.), “Foods for the belly and the belly for foods” (6:13a), may represent a distorted

“views held by some at Corinth that he wishes to dispute.” See W. W. Klein, C. L. Blomberg, and R. L. Hubbard Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 436.

<sup>139</sup> Garland (1 Corinthians, 219–22) is cautious regarding the possibility of accurately discerning Corinthian theological error through mirror-reading the text. In 6:12–20 Paul’s emphasis falls on the gravity of the sin of *porneia*, and his argument provides a counter-cultural view of sexuality that lays the groundwork for arguments to follow.

<sup>140</sup> So also Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 459.

<sup>141</sup> Other translations render, “All things are lawful for me” (so NASB, ESV).

Corinthian view of the human body, to which Paul responds in 6:13b–18a. Some think the slogan includes the statement, “But God will destroy them both.” The third purported slogan, “All other sins a man commits are outside his body,” is less certain than the first two and more controversial. Either way, the interpretation of the statement is quite challenging. If not a slogan, then what does Paul mean by referring to sins committed “outside his body”? An increasingly popular view among the commentators is to identify this difficult verse as yet another instance of a Corinthian viewpoint related to the human body to which Paul responds in 6:18b. The parallel pattern of argumentation between 6:13–18a and 6:18b–20 supports this view. In each case a supposed slogan is followed by Paul’s response, including the question, “Do you not know?”, followed by a concluding command as follows:

Food for the stomach and the stomach  
for food.  
(slogan)

[But God will destroy them both]  
(response)

The body is ... meant ... for the  
Lord ... and the Lord for the  
body.  
By his power God raised the

Lord ... and he will raise us  
also

Do you not know that your  
bodies are members of  
Christ himself?

Do you not know that he who  
joins himself to a prostitute  
is one with her in body?

But he who unites himself with  
the Lord is one with him in  
spirit.

(command)

Flee from sexual immorality  
(slogan)

All other sins a man commits are  
outside the body.

(response)

But he who sins sexually sins  
against his own body.

Do you not know that  
your body is a temple of  
the Holy Spirit  
and  
you are not your own;  
you were bought at a  
price.

Therefore, honor God with  
your body.

(command)

In the end, one’s view of the presence or absence of slogans does not obscure the clarity of Paul’s teaching regarding

the gravity of the sin of sexual immorality and the nature of the believer's body. The sanctity of the body is the key teaching of the passage as set forth through a number of positive affirmations: (1) The body is for the Lord and the Lord is for the body (6:13b). (2) The body is destined for resurrection through God's power (6:14). (3) The body is a member of Christ (6:15). (4) The one who is joined to the Lord is "one with him in spirit" (6:17). (5) The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (6:19). (6) Christians must honor God with their bodies because they have been bought at a price (6:20). In sum, the theme of God's ownership of our bodies and the relational nature of embodied, physical existence, whereby we bring either shame or glory to God, dominates the passage. Throughout the argument Paul emphasizes both individual and corporate realities in his use of the term "body."<sup>142</sup> On the basis of Gen 2:24, Paul

<sup>142</sup> The term σῶμα (body) occurs eight times in 6:12–20 and forty-six times in the letter. Scholars debate whether Paul uses the term holistically to denote the whole person or whether his emphasis in 6:12–20 is on the physical aspect of human life. On the holistic view see J. A. T. Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* (London: SCM, 1966). In this view Paul uses anthropological terms such as

asserts that an individual joined to a prostitute constitutes "one body." Paul expands on the corporate identity of individual believers as members of Christ's body in chap. 12 (see esp. 12:12–14, 27).

6:12 We cannot know for certain the origin of the phrase, "Everything is permissible for me," or who was making the claim.<sup>143</sup> Even if a Corinthian slogan, the

"body" and "flesh" to refer to the whole person under different aspects. "Body," for example, is equated with "flesh" in 6:16. For a different perspective see R. H. Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology with Emphasis on Pauline Anthropology*, SNTSMS (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976). The body "is that part of man in and through which he performs concrete actions" (Gundry, 50). It is clear that Paul places great emphasis on embodied existence not only in this present passage but also in his discussion of the resurrection of the dead in chap. 15. If there is no resurrection of the dead, Paul argues, then those who have died have perished (15:18).

<sup>143</sup> Thiselton (*First Corinthians*, 460) states that, in spite of arguments to the contrary, "There can be no question that the initial clause of v. 12 represents a quotation used as a maxim by some or by many at Corinth." Barrett (*First Corinthians*, 144) thinks that the slogan was "the watchword of the gnostic party in Corinth. See also Bruce, 1 and 2

saying may have originated in Paul's own teaching regarding Christian freedom.<sup>144</sup> Either way Paul seems to affirm the pithy statement with two qualifications: "Not everything is beneficial" and "I will not be mastered by anything." Paul championed Christian freedom ([Gal 5:1](#)), but his view of freedom was always conditioned by the reality that believers are "in Christ," under the Lord's authority, and exist in relation to others in community.<sup>145</sup> The

*Corinthians*, 62; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 108–9. Fitzmyer (*First Corinthians*, 263) comments that it is difficult to know whether Paul is responding to a specific slogan (perhaps Stoic), but he knows that it is being bandied about in Corinth, which is sufficient reason for him to react to it.

<sup>144</sup> So Robertson and Plummer, *First Corinthians*, 121–22; Grosheide, *First Corinthians*, 144–45; Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 95; Fee, *First Corinthians*, 251–52; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 461. Dodd holds that [6:12](#) and [10:23](#) in their entirety are Paul's own words, though not a Corinthian slogan. See B. J. Dodd, "Paul's Paradigmatic 'I' and *1 Corinthians* 6:12," *JSNT* 59 (1995): 39–58.

<sup>145</sup> Collins (*First Corinthians*, 241) notes, "The Corinthian slogan 'all things are lawful' (v. 12) is echoed in [10:23](#). The inclusio that is thus formed encompasses a multifaceted and complex development of thought in which

word translated "beneficial" recurs in the repetition of the same phrase in [10:23](#) with reference to food sacrificed to idols and also in [12:7](#) with reference to the manifestations of the Spirit for the "common good" of all in the church.<sup>146</sup> Paul offers himself as the example of one who does what benefits others for the sake of the gospel (see [9:19–23](#); [10:31–33](#)). The second qualification, "I will not be mastered by anything," indicates that one's actions in the name of so-called freedom can have the exact opposite effect of enslavement.<sup>147</sup> Fee suggests that the notion of being brought under the authority of another ties in to the issue raised in [6:15–16](#) and should be understood in light of [7:4](#). In [6:15–16](#) Paul refers specifically to being brought under the authority of the prostitute. Fee explains, "That is, by being joined to her in *porneia* the believer constitutes someone else, outside of Christ, as the unlawful lord over one's body."<sup>148</sup> In [7:4](#), husbands and wives each

Paul deals with the issue of human freedom." On the issue of one's rights in the context of freedom, see especially [8:9](#), [9:4–18](#).

<sup>146</sup> Gk. συμφέρω. The cognate adjective, σύμφορος, translated "good," occurs in [7:35](#) and [10:33](#).

<sup>147</sup> Cf. [John 8:34](#), "Jesus replied, 'I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.'"

have “authority” over the body of their spouse in the lawful union of marriage. Robertson and Plummer suggest that the first qualification addresses the effect an action will have on others and the second addresses the effect it will have on oneself.<sup>149</sup> They further suggest that 6:12–13 forms a preface to the subject of *porneia* in order to show that it is not one of those things that may or may not be lawful according to circumstances. It is always outside the bounds of Christian liberty. “While many things are permissible and become wrong only if indulged to the extent that they are harmful to others or ourselves, fornication is not a legitimate use of the body...”<sup>150</sup>

<sup>148</sup> Fee, *First Corinthians*, 253.

<sup>149</sup> Robertson and Plummer, *First Corinthians*, 122.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 123. Garland (*1 Corinthians*, 227–28), following Dodd (“Paul’s Paradigmatic ‘I’”), does not think that the phrase, “Everything is permissible for me” was a Corinthian slogan used theologically to justify certain behaviors: “It is more plausible that Paul cites a familiar notion about freedom found in the Corinthian culture and recasts it in Christian terms than that he parrots the arguments of sensualists in the church to repudiate them” (228). Garland thinks it unlikely that they could have so misconstrued Paul’s teaching to proclaim such

6:13–14 The phrase, “food for the stomach and the stomach for food,” if reflecting a Corinthian slogan/point of view, indicates a particular perspective of the human body that needs correcting in light of Jesus’ resurrection and the destiny of the believer’s body. It is commonly argued that the Corinthians believed that

conduct permissible (cf. 5:9). Paul’s response, however, is a “theological” response. We should not downplay the extent to which the church could misconstrue Paul’s teaching. It is not hard to imagine, given the realities of first-century Greek culture, that Paul’s teaching could become warped rather quickly, and thus the need for such lengthy and extensive communication with this church. In his letter to the Galatians, for example, Paul marveled at how quickly they turned from his original teaching and succumbed to legalism (*Gal* 1:6–7). Likewise, the Corinthians may have quickly adopted aberrant views of Christian freedom. See also the critique of Garland in J. Murphy-O’Connor, *Keys to First Corinthians: Revisiting the Major Issues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 24–26. In sum, there are three options: (1) These are Paul’s own words which the Corinthians have misconstrued. (2) This is a Corinthian slogan. (3) Paul cites a familiar notion within the culture, recasts in Christian terms, and adopts for his own purposes.

sexual activity was a mere bodily function like eating food, which led to the conclusion that normal bodily functions have no abiding significance and are therefore of no ultimate consequence. Thiselton contends that the slogan extends to the phrase, “but God will destroy them both.”<sup>151</sup> This view surmises that the purpose of the slogan was to articulate a sense of distance between the deeds done in the body and a supposed “spiritual” level of life, a dualism foreign to Paul’s thought. The logic that Paul employs in this section on the body receives fuller explication in [15:12–58](#).<sup>152</sup> Fee likewise thinks Paul’s words indicate a very tight argument against the Corinthians’ position about the human body.<sup>153</sup> Robertson and Plummer raise the possibility that

<sup>151</sup> A. C. Thiselton argues this in an earlier article (“Realised Eschatology at Corinth,” *NTS* 24 [1978]: 510–26) and maintains this view in his more recent commentary (*First Corinthians*, 462). So also J. Murphy-O’Connor, “Corinthian Slogans in 1 Cor 6:12–20,” *CBQ* 40 (1978): 391–96; Collins, *First Corinthians*, 245; Ciampa and Rosner, *First Corinthians*, 254.

<sup>152</sup> Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 463. According to Thiselton, the “belly” (NIV, “stomach”; κοιλία) “stands as a kind of metonym for all things physical and transient.”

<sup>153</sup> Fee, *First Corinthians*, 253.

the Corinthians have confused what Paul distinguishes, food and fornication (see [Acts 15:23–29](#)). Garland, who is far more cautious about Corinthian slogans, views the saying, “food for the stomach and the stomach for food,” as a maxim that Paul cites in order to refer to the order of creation. Food is for the belly and will be destroyed, but the body is for the Lord but will not be destroyed.<sup>154</sup> The analogy simply demonstrates Christ’s lordship over the believer’s body<sup>155</sup> and the gravity of the sin of *porneia*. Paul argues that “they should live in ways congruent with who they are.”<sup>156</sup> In the final analysis, therefore, it is possible, but not certain, that the Corinthians were correlating “the belly and food” and the “body and sex” in some way. Either way, if a correlation exists between the belly and food as long as earthly life lasts, there is no such correlation between the “body” and “fornication.” The body was made in order to become a member of Christ who lived and died in order to redeem it. The body

<sup>154</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 230. So also V. P. Furnish, *The Theology of the First Letter to the Corinthians*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 57–58.

<sup>155</sup> Cf. [Rom 6:12–13](#), [19](#); [12:1](#); [Phil 1:20](#).

<sup>156</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 231.

will not be destroyed but is destined for resurrection.<sup>157</sup> Jesus has as his purpose and destiny to dwell in and glorify the body (Rom 8:23) that is united to him through the Spirit (6:17).<sup>158</sup> Ciampa and Rosner comment that Paul was not dealing with an overrealized eschatology on this issue but rather “an underestimation of eschatology.”<sup>159</sup> The fact that the body will be raised from the dead has enormous implications for present behavior. God will do away with food and the stomach, but God raised up Jesus and he will also raise believers by his power (cf. 15:43). The destiny of the body stands in direct contrast to the destiny of “food and the stomach.” The latter will be destroyed, but the body will be raised from the dead. The body was not meant for dishonorable purposes but rather for God’s glory (6:20). As the argument continues, Paul shows that there is the closest possible correlation between Christ and those who belong to him. What happens to Christ, happens to those incorporated into Christ (cf. Rom 6:4; 8:11; 1 Cor 15:20).

**6:15–17** Following the emphasis on resurrection in 6:14 and in response to

<sup>157</sup> Robertson and Plummer, *First Corinthians*, 123.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>159</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *First Corinthians*, 255.

the use of prostitutes, Paul constructs a two-part argument in support of the claim that “the body is for the Lord” (6:13). Each part of the argument is introduced by the question, “Do you not know?”<sup>160</sup> First, what they should know is that every believer is a member of Christ,<sup>161</sup> which is why sexual vice is so unthinkable for the Christian, even more so since the prostitute was often associated with the pagan temple.<sup>162</sup> From the basic premise that the believer is a member of Christ, Paul draws the inference in the form of a question, “Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never!”<sup>163</sup> Union with a

<sup>160</sup> Fee (*First Corinthians*, 257) suggests a chiasm: A—Their bodies are members of Christ; B—Therefore, they may not be members of a prostitute; B’—Joined to a prostitute, they become one body with her; A’—Joined to Christ they become one S/spirit with him. As in 6:3–4, the question, “Do you not know?”, appears in successive verses.

<sup>161</sup> Gk. μέλος (member). The term occurs thirteen times in chap. 12 (12:12, 14, 18–20, 22, 25–27).

<sup>162</sup> So Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 97–98.

<sup>163</sup> The NIV translation, “Never!” in Greek is μὴ γένοιτο, an expression of strong disagreement, “May it never be!” The expression is common in Romans and Galatians (see Rom

Esp. since most prostitute was temple postituion

harlot robs Christ of one of his members.<sup>164</sup> That a believer might join himself to a prostitute is unthinkable for Paul. Garland suggests that what Paul leaves unstated in the analogy is that the prostitute represents a different cosmic body. “The prostitute is not conceived of here as an individual person but as a confederate of evil, a member of the dark, death-dealing forces at war against Christ.”<sup>165</sup> Paul does not actually say that

3:4, 6, 31; 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14; 11:1, 11; Gal 2:17; 3:21; 6:14).

<sup>164</sup> So Robertson and Plummer, *First Corinthians*, 125.

<sup>165</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 233. Ciampa and Rosner (*First Corinthians*, 258) comment, “He does not have in mind the prostitute as an individual, but, opposite the corporate Christ, she appears as a symbol of that which is inimical to the sanctified status of God’s people. Whether of the temple or secular variety, the prostitute here is a symbol of darkness and defilement. It is an argument from the incompatibility of two realms. Paul uses the same logic in *1 Corinthians* 10:14–22 and *2 Corinthians* 6:14–7:1. In both of these texts that which is opposed to God is named as the demonic. Here in chap. 6 the worry is not explicitly fellowship with the demonic, but rather the notion of contamination and uncleanness, a concern that is raised again in *1*

this sin severs all ties with Christ, but some think he implies it.<sup>166</sup>

The second stage of Paul’s argument expands on 6:15 and implies that the nature of the sexual act was something known and accepted by the Corinthians based on the revelation of Scripture. Sexual union in and of itself is not incompatible with union with Christ (see 7:1–7), even in the case of the believer married to the unbeliever (7:12–16). Here Paul has in mind union with a prostitute.<sup>167</sup> The NIV translates the participle in 6:16 in the middle voice, “he who unites himself.”<sup>168</sup> The basis of Paul’s

*Corinthians* 7:14–15.”

<sup>166</sup> Cf. B. N. Fisk, “*Porneuein* as Body Violation: The Unique Nature of Sexual Sin in *1 Corinthians* 6.18,” *NTS* 42 (1996): 554.

<sup>167</sup> So also Fee (*First Corinthians*, 259–60). The word translated “unite” (κολλάω) is often used in the LXX in a religious sense (see *Deut* 6:13; 10:20; 28:60; *1 Kgs* 11:2; *2 Kgs* 1:18; 3:3; 18:6). In *Gen* 2:24, the word is the compound προσκολλάω. This term, likewise, is used in a religious sense in the LXX (*Deut* 11:22, “If you carefully observe all these commands I am giving you to follow—to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways and to hold fast to him—”).

<sup>168</sup> Gk. κολλώμενος. In this case a “gnomic present,” referring to what is true in all cir-

claim is [Gen 2:24](#), “They will become one flesh.”<sup>169</sup> In the sexual act two people become one, forming an enduring bond with one another. Paul makes the case in [7:4](#) that, in the marriage relationship, one’s body belongs to the other. The Scriptural quote is introduced not by “it is written” but by a verb that could imply either “God says,” or “it says,”<sup>170</sup> referring to Scripture.<sup>171</sup> By way of contrast, the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with him. One might expect Paul to continue with “body” language, but the union between Christ and believers is of an altogether different kind than the

circumstances. As often as and whenever a person has intercourse with a harlot, he becomes one flesh with her (so Grosheide, *First Corinthians*, 149). The participle could also be passive, “The one who is joined.”

<sup>169</sup> See also [Matt 19:5](#). Ciampa and Rosner (*First Corinthians*, 259) note that the Genesis text is used also in [Mal 2:15–16](#) to prohibit divorce.

<sup>170</sup> Gk. φημί.

<sup>171</sup> Ciampa and Rosner (*First Corinthians*, 259–60) suggest that the function of the scriptural quotation serves not only to demonstrate the gravity of sex with a prostitute but also to draw attention to the “spiritual marriage” between the believer and Christ (see [Rom 7:2–3](#); [1 Cor 7:32–35](#); [2 Cor 11:2](#); [Eph 5:32](#)).

union created by the sexual act, and this union can only be expressed in terms of the Spirit. Thus, we should probably see the NIV’s “spirit” as a reference to the Holy Spirit’s role in effecting union with Christ.<sup>172</sup> Grosheide notes that what is called into being by the sin of fornication is contrasted with what presently exists for members of the church. Paul refers to the glory of the church, and by doing so, he shows how great the sin of harlotry is and how imperative it is to hate this sin.<sup>173</sup> The language of [Jas 4:4](#) captures Paul’s sentiments: “You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.”

**6:18–20** In [6:18](#) Paul interjects the command, “Flee from sexual immorality.” The command is paralleled in [10:14](#), “Flee from idolatry.” Most commentators draw attention to the present tense of the

<sup>172</sup> So Fee, *First Corinthians*, 260; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 469; Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 235; Ciampa and Rosner, *First Corinthians*, 261. On believers being “one spirit” with Christ see [Rom 8:9–11](#); [1 Cor 15:44–45](#); [2 Cor 3:17](#). Note also the Spirit’s role in chap. 12 in Paul’s further development of the concept of the “body of Christ” (esp. [12:12–14](#)).

<sup>173</sup> Grosheide, *First Corinthians*, 150.

imperative, which would carry the sense of habitually fleeing from this sin. It is also probable that the sin to be fled is much broader than the mention of prostitution in the immediate context.<sup>174</sup> There is no other response possible in light of the gravity of the sin and the propensity of humans to entrap themselves in it. Robertson and Plummer comment that the lack of grammatical connection to the previous statement marks the urgency of the situation.<sup>175</sup> The same command appears in Jewish literature, and it is often suggested that Paul may have in mind the story of Joseph's flight from Potiphar's wife in [Gen 39](#).<sup>176</sup>

<sup>174</sup> So also Ciampa and Rosner (*First Corinthians*, 262). The command is “an apt concluding appeal to chaps. 5–6, the injunction is a blanket condemnation of all illicit sexual relations.”

<sup>175</sup> Robertson and Plummer, *First Corinthians*, 127.

<sup>176</sup> *Testament of Reuben* 5.5, which contains the same phrase, also depends on the story of Joseph. See B. S. Rosner, “A Possible Quotation of *Test. Reuben* 5:5 in *1 Corinthians* 6:18a,” *JTS* 43 (1992): 123–27. For further warnings against immorality see esp. [Prov 5:3](#) and [6:23–7:27](#). Ciampa and Rosner (*First Corinthians*, 263) note also that the *Testament of Reuben* mentions that Joseph “glorified

What follows the command to flee from immorality is the notoriously difficult phrase, “All other sins a man commits are outside the body,” which, broadly speaking, is to be understood either as another Corinthian slogan to which Paul responds, or a further line of argument on why Christians should avoid sexual immorality. The word “other” is added for clarification in translation.<sup>177</sup> The Greek is unqualified, “Every sin which a man does is outside the body ...” Nowhere else does Paul speak of sins “outside the body”<sup>178</sup> in contrast to a sin “against the body.” What does Paul mean and to whose body does he refer? Is this the Christian's body, the body of anyone generally who commits this sin, or the body of Christ?<sup>179</sup> The

God” (8.5) and that he was “one in whom is the Spirit of God” (41.38). Thus the *Testament of Reuben* may indicate a traditional interpretation of [Gen 39](#) that influenced Paul.

<sup>177</sup> [Matthew 12:31](#) is often pointed out as a parallel, “And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.” The implication is “every *other* sin ...”

<sup>178</sup> The phrase “out of the body” (ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματος) occurs in [2 Cor 12:2](#).

<sup>179</sup> On the view that Paul refers to the corporate Body of Christ, see R. Kempthorne,

view that this is another Corinthian slogan suggests that the statement is yet another Corinthian viewpoint concerning the nature of the physical body (cf. 6:13) that is untenable.<sup>180</sup> Paul responds to their erroneous view with the statement, “but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.” Others are convinced that the entire verse is Paul’s own formulation and what he means is that sexual sin is either more damaging than other sins or unique in kind, qualitatively different from other sins, that is, it is distinctive and worse than other sins in some way.<sup>181</sup> Both views have to contend with the meaning of “sinning against his own body.” The context suggests that Paul has in mind the incompatibility of the “one body” constituted by the unlawful sexual union with the believer’s union with Christ (6:15). Furthermore, the body is the “temple of the Holy Spirit” (6:19). Sexual immorality is a sin against Christ and a violation of the sanctity of the tem-

“Incest and the Body of Christ: A Study of 1 Corinthians vi. 12–20,” *NTS* 14 (1967): 568–74.

<sup>180</sup> Among the recent commentators who take this view, see Collins, Thiselton, and Fitzmyer. For a listing of the different positions taken on this prior to Collins, see Fisk, “*Porneuein*,” 542–43.

<sup>181</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

ple.<sup>182</sup>

The final two verses, therefore, further explain “sinning against the body.” Already in 3:16–17 Paul has identified the Corinthian church corporately as the temple of God, the dwelling place of the Spirit. For this reason they are holy. In 6:19, the emphasis is on the believer’s individual body, though incorporated into Christ’s body. Paul’s wording in 6:19–20 stresses that the Holy Spirit is a gift, “whom you have received from God” (cf. 4:7). It also stresses God’s ownership of the temple: “You are not your own; you were bought at a price” (cf. 7:23). Thus, this unit concludes in similar fashion as the previous unit (6:11) by reminding the Corinthians of the realities of their salvation. Verses 19b–20a provide yet another metaphor depicting salvation as redemption from the slave market.<sup>183</sup> Klein sees a possible allusion to *Hos* 3:1–3 that describes Hosea’s redemption of his wife out of her bondage back to a life of wholeness: “Similarly, in 1 Corinthians 6 the audience has been redeemed out of bondage to sin (including licentiousness) to a life in which sexual sin was unconscionable.”<sup>184</sup> The final command to

<sup>182</sup> See also Byrne, “Sinning Against One’s Own Body.”

<sup>183</sup> Cf. 1:30, Christ is our “redemption.”

“honor God with your body” is the positive complement of the warning in 6:18 to “flee from immorality.” In 8:1–11:1 Paul will take up another urgent issue in Corinth, namely, idolatry. His exhortation is the same: “Flee from idolatry” (10:14) and “do it all for the glory of God” (10:31).

<sup>184</sup> G. L. Klein, “Hosea 3:1–3—Background to 1 Cor 6:19b–20?,” *CTR* 3 (1988): 374.