

## 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

**Pastor:** 1 Corinthians 6:12-20: All things are now lawful.

**“All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything. Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Messiah? Shall I then take away the members of Messiah and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body *with her*? For He says, ‘THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH’ [Genesis 2:24]. But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit *with Him*. Flee immorality. Every *other* sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.”**

**6:12-20** On the whole, the letter of 1 Corinthians is a text within the Apostolic Scriptures that Messianic people not only tend to avoid—they tend to just flat not know what to do with.<sup>1</sup> This is especially true of a section like 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, and what happens when not only various Messianic Bible readers—but even a number of recognized leaders and teachers (at least in my experience)—encounter a statement like “All things are lawful for me” (1 Corinthians 6:12 [2x], NASU). *Many feel hopeless as to what they should do.* Did the Apostle Paul just make a claim that all things were lawful for human conduct? How would this fit into the discussions he has just had with the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)? This can then be compounded with how various contemporary Christians might take this same statement, and then apply it to a series of activities, which for certain would have been condemned in the Tanach or Old Testament, but are now believed “lawful” in the post-resurrection era.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians more than any other group of First Century Messiah followers. The difficulty with approaching 1&2 Corinthians, especially the first letter of the two, involves how Paul was directly engaged in dialogue with these people, as he had sent them a previous letter (1 Corinthians 5:9), and was responding to their own letter(s) (1 Corinthians 7:1) and/or questions via some courier sent to him. Both 1&2 Corinthians bear witness to the modern reader that we are widely encountering only one side of a discussion, although this should not deter us from examining the text of Paul’s writing, and engaging with a fair scope of examiners’ proposals and opinions.

For a variety of complicated factors, it is easily detected by a survey of 1 Corinthians for sure, that many of these people felt so secure in their Messiah faith, that they thought they could be involved in some very, very sinful activities, and actually get away with it. The Apostle Paul had to extensively argue with them, often using common sense logic, for them to return to a Messiah-focused path. The discussion seen in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 confronts several of the Corinthian slogans, statements widely circulated by groups or sub-groups in the assembly, here used to validate various Corinthian “Believers” soliciting prostitution. A slogan such as “Everything is permissible for me” (1 Corinthians 6:12, NIV) is cross-examined by Paul, and given a negative retort.

Problematically, there are some Christian examiners of this section of Paul’s letter who will draw assumptions and conclusions on the basis of the Apostle Paul having dismissed the relevancy of God’s Torah and/or the Apostolic decree (Acts 15:20, 29). David K. Lowery, for example, is one who asserts, “The theme of legality continued as Paul turned to another problem troubling the Corinthian assembly. This problem was the issue of freedom from the Old Testament Law in the area of sexual relationships.”<sup>2</sup> Such a conclusion

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<sup>1</sup> This entry has been adapted from the commentary *1 Corinthians for the Practical Messianic*.

<sup>2</sup> David K. Lowery, “1 Corinthians,” in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 516; some similar sentiments are present in Shira Lander, “Freedom from the Law,” in *Jewish Annotated New Testament*, 296.

runs into a major issue with Paul's actual quotation from the Torah (1 Corinthians 6:16; Genesis 2:24), and certainly the many embedded concepts from the Tanach and Second Temple Jewish thought witnessed in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. Thinking that Paul would widely disregard the Torah's sexual instruction—here being concerned with heterosexual activity—the violation of which often merited capital punishment for Ancient Israel (cf. Deuteronomy 22:13-29), is unsubstantiable when 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 is fully weighed.

Contrary to thinking that the Apostle Paul would even throw out the Torah's code of sexuality, and here he is confronting its licentious backlash—it is more frequently thought, in various degrees, that some sort of errant Hellenistic philosophy, incipient-Gnostic, or just libertine thought is present, particularly witnessed by the statement "Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food" (1 Corinthians 6:13). 1 Corinthians commentators are widely agreed that both 6:12 and 6:13 include Corinthian slogans that Paul has to cross-examine. To many of the Corinthians, what a person did physically mattered very little, because the internal person was apparently already saved. But as Paul says, "For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:20), as what people do physically *does truly matter*. The behavior that had surfaced in Corinth, ran very much against how "you were washed...you were sanctified...you were justified in the name of the Lord Yeshua the Messiah and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11).

In the estimation of Gordon D. Fee, "Apparently some men within the...community are going to prostitutes and are arguing for the right to do so. Being people of the Spirit, they imply, has moved them to a higher plane, the realm of spirit, where they are unaffected by the behavior that has merely to do with the body."<sup>3</sup> Along with this, it has also been noted that there is a strong likelihood that the information seen here may have not just concerned the males in general, but some of the leading men among the Corinthian "Believers."<sup>4</sup> A lesser view, as held by David E. Garland, would be "That [Paul] does not censure a particular culprit may mean only that the pattern of behavior was widespread or that he had no direct report of it."<sup>5</sup> Today's Messianic Believers, who have a high regard for the Torah's sexual code as well as the continuance of the dietary laws in the post-resurrection era, have to surely reckon with 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, how various theologians have approached this passage, but perhaps more pressing how contemporary Christians have pushed these passages without any certain framework.

**6:12** Many lay readers, encountering the English rendering, "All things are lawful for me" (1 Corinthians 6:12, NASU), will conclude that the Apostle Paul considered the Torah or Law of Moses to be abolished for the post-resurrection era. Going further, some might think a popular conclusion like "All things are now lawful," means that there are no boundaries whatsoever for the conduct and behavior of Messiah followers. If "All things are now lawful" means that born again Believers are not to keep *any* laws or commandments from God, then could this not be taken as meaning that they are allowed to do whatever they want, regardless of Divine consequences? Would this, at least, not mean that those things which are considered sin in the Torah or Law of Moses—which (poor) Ancient Israel was prohibited from doing, sometimes with violation meriting capital punishment—are now permitted? This could mean, among other things, that:

- theft and burglary are neither crimes nor sin
- lying in a court of justice is neither a crime nor a sin
- pre-marital sex, extra-marital affairs, and homosexuality are not sin
- murder is neither a crime nor a sin
- idolatry is not sin, even when practiced alongside the worship of the God of Israel

If the Apostle Paul is actually communicating in 1 Corinthians 6:12 that God's Law is to be cast aside, then we really should have a problem with Paul. The statement "All things are lawful for me" would flat contradict what the Apostle John communicates at the end of Revelation: "But for the cowardly and

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<sup>3</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), pp 250-251.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen C. Barton, "1 Corinthians," in *ECB*, 1327.

<sup>5</sup> David E. Garland, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 221.

unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part *will be* in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8). Fortunately, though, there are enough mature Christians who are aware of the potential problems with *only* reading 1 Corinthians 6:12, perhaps *significantly* removed from the verses which immediately surround it, and also the context of what is being addressed. Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 preceding, quite surprisingly to some, closely mirror what John says about those who will suffer eternal punishment:

“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.”

There has to be a better explanation of 1 Corinthians 6:12, than it somehow allowing for blatant violation of God’s Torah, with people totally dismissing the Law.

Any Bible reader who has surveyed the Pauline Epistles is aware that the Apostle writes more to the Corinthians than to any another audience, and much of what he has to say is delivered in a rather sharp, corrective tone. There is internal evidence from 1 Corinthians 5:9, where Paul says, “I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people,” that he wrote a previous letter to them before what we now call 1 Corinthians, which is no longer extant. The assembly at Corinth was riddled with problems, as many of the Corinthian Believers were not being properly trained up in the foundational guidelines of God’s Word and what He considered acceptable and unacceptable—or they simply disregarded such principles as not being necessary.

One of the most serious problems that the Corinthian assembly faced, was that of sexual immorality. This apparently did not only include sexual promiscuity between males and females, but extended to homosexuality and even incest. In 1 Corinthians 5:1 Paul attests to the fact that “It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father’s wife.” He says quite candidly “there is immorality among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans” (RSV). This is how bad things were in Corinth, and with this backdrop, how on Earth would Paul be telling them that “all things were lawful,” to be construed as meaning that a Torah-less kind of behavior was acceptable?

It should be first noted that the rendering “All things are lawful” in the NASU (and similarly the RSV, NRSV, ESV) is a translation mistake. A Greek term that would correctly be rendered as “lawful” or “lawfully” in the Apostolic Scriptures is *nomimōs* (νομίμως), “in accordance with rule(s)/law” (BDAG),<sup>6</sup> which appears in 1 Timothy 1:8: “we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully [*nomimōs*]” (NASU). But *nomimōs* (or some other derivation from the root *nomos*, νόμος) is not what appears in the source text of 1 Corinthians 6:12.

The actual clause in question, which appears twice in 1 Corinthians 6:12, is *panta moi exestin* (πάντα μοι ἐξεστίν). The term of interest is *exesti* (ἐξεστίν), defined as either “it is allowed, it is in one’s power, it is possible” (LS),<sup>7</sup> or perhaps also “it is proper, permitted” (CGEDNT).<sup>8</sup> J. Paul Sampley notably explains how “The...translation of ἐξεστίν (*exestin*) as ‘lawful’ is misleading; the maxim’s contention has nothing to do with the law, but with what is permissible, allowable, or authorized for the believer.”<sup>9</sup> The NIV rendering of 1 Corinthians 6:12, “Everything is permissible for me,”<sup>10</sup> does much better justice to what *exestin* actually means; the NEB has the similar “I am free to do anything”<sup>11</sup> (cf. 2 Corinthians 12:4). Anthony C. Thiselton

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<sup>6</sup> BDAG, 676.

<sup>7</sup> LS, 273.

<sup>8</sup> CGEDNT, 64.

<sup>9</sup> J. Paul Sampley, “The First Letter to the Corinthians,” in Leander E. Keck, ed. et. al., *New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 10:860.

Sampley is working from the NRSV in his commentary.

<sup>10</sup> The TNIV has, “I have the right to do anything.”

<sup>11</sup> The 1993 German Elberfelder Bibel has “Alles ist mir erlaubt.” The adjective *erlaubt* means “permitted, allowed,” notably in the sense of something like “*Rauchen ist hier nicht [erlaubt]*” or “smoking is not allowed here” (*Langenscheidts New College German Dictionary, German-English* [Berlin and Munich: Langenscheidt KG, 1995], 195).

reflects the viewpoint, “The traditional translation *all things are lawful* (AV/KJV, NRSV) does not mean *all things are sanctioned* by the law, but denotes that which the law *no longer prohibits*, i.e., it is part of the Corinthian theology that Christian believers have been granted **liberty from the law**,” as he argues for the rendering “Liberty to do anything.”<sup>12</sup> While the Torah is a factor in properly interpreting 1 Corinthians 6:12, we will see that more is in view as these Corinthians who were addressed basically threw off all restraints in following *any* code of conduct.<sup>13</sup>

The major question, that often goes unrealized by many Bible readers when encountering 1 Corinthians 6:12, is whether the Apostle Paul could himself—who has *just affirmed* in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 that there are high sins which will merit exclusion from God’s Kingdom, denounced as sin in the Torah—personally conclude “Everything is permissible for me.” Regardless of which position they take regarding the validity of the Torah in the post-resurrection era, 1 Corinthians commentators widely agree that “Everything is permissible” (*panta moi exestin*) was a slogan adhered to by many of the Corinthians, which Paul thought it quite necessary to address in his letter.<sup>14</sup> Unlike the NASU, versions like the RSV, NIV, NRSV, ESV, and HCSB include what is stated in quotation marks “ ”, to reflect the view that Paul is repeating what many of the Corinthians have either been saying to him, possibly in a letter to Paul, or what has been reported back to him as what they had been saying. And, this is not the only Corinthian slogan that interpreters have detected within the Epistle of 1 Corinthians that Paul had to address in his letter, which possibly involved:

- “Everything is permissible for me” (1 Corinthians 6:12, NIV; 10:13).
- “[I]t is good for a man not to touch a woman” (1 Corinthians 7:1).
- “[W]e know that we all have knowledge” (1 Corinthians 8:1).
- “[W]e know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world” (1 Corinthians 8:4).
- “But food will not commend us to God” (1 Corinthians 8:8).
- “[T]here is no resurrection of the dead” (1 Corinthians 15:15).<sup>15</sup>

It is true that there were no punctuation, quotation marks, or even commas in the original Greek letter written to the Corinthians. But in light of how Paul precedes in his comments, chastising the Corinthians for their sin and how he says that such individuals have no place in the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10), viewing “Everything is permissible” as an errant Corinthian slogan, separated out with quotation marks “ ”, is most appropriate.<sup>16</sup> F.F. Bruce asserts, “these words...are rightly placed within quotation marks; they appear to have been a slogan of the gnosticizing party in the church which was impatient of the restraints of conventional morality.”<sup>17</sup> There are notably various modern versions which have taken *panta moi exestin* as

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<sup>12</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *New International Greek Testament Commentary: The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 461.

<sup>13</sup> With the Greek term *exesti* (ἐξέσται) in view, other places where “permitted” or “permissible” (or even “allowed”) would be a much better rendering, include: Mark 2:24, 26; 3:4; 6:18; 10:2; 12:14; Matthew 12:2, 4, 10, 12; 14:4; 19:3; 20:15; 22:17; 27:6; Luke 6:2, 4, 9; 14:3; 20:22; Acts 16:21; 22:25.

<sup>14</sup> F.F. Bruce, *New Century Bible: 1 and 2 Corinthians* (London: Oliphants, 1971), 62; Leon Morris, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 95; Fee, *1 Corinthians*, pp 251-253; Craig Blomberg, *NIV Application Commentary: 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), pp 125-126; Ben Witherington III, *Conflict & Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), pp 167-168; Richard B. Hays, *Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching: 1 Corinthians* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1997), pp 101-103; Marion L. Soards, *New International Biblical Commentary: 1 Corinthians* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), pp 128-129; Thiselton, pp 460-462; Sampley, in *NIB*, 10:860-862; Craig S. Keener, *New Cambridge Bible Commentary: 1-2 Corinthians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 57; Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *Pillar New Testament Commentary: The First Letter to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), pp 251-254.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Witherington, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 167; also see chart in Hays, *1 Corinthians*, 102.

The degree to which any of these may, or may not have been, Corinthian slogans, is obviously something to be evaluated in each passage.

<sup>16</sup> Separating this statement in quotation marks “ ” is witnessed in the TLV with, “Everything is permitted for me,” and The Messianic Writings with, “All things are possible for me.”

The ISR Scriptures, a Sacred Name version that frequently circulates throughout the broad Messianic community, has “All is permitted me” for 1 Corinthians 6:9, but does not separate it out in quotation marks.

<sup>17</sup> Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 62.

not only being a Corinthian slogan, but have gone a little further, adding “you say” to their English rendering or paraphrase of 1 Corinthians 6:12:

**REB:** “I am free to do anything, you say.”

**NLT:** “You say, ‘I am allowed to do anything’”

**CJB/CJSB:** “You say, ‘For me, everything is permitted?’”

**TNIV:** “I have the right to do anything, you say—but not everything is beneficial.”

While there are those who would say that the Apostle Paul could have been in agreement with this slogan,<sup>18</sup> others would note that his intention was to at least issue some kind of response, if not a rejoinder or rebuttal. Fee thinks that it is hard, at least here in 1 Corinthians 6:12, to think that Paul really likes what he has heard the Corinthians say:

“[H]e does not begin by attacking their illicit behavior; rather, he confronts the theology on which that behavior is predicated. ‘Everything is permissible for me’ is almost certainly a Corinthian theological slogan. This is confirmed by the way Paul cites it again in 10:23; in both cases he qualifies it so sharply as to negate it—at least as a theological absolute.”<sup>19</sup>

A lesser perspective is represented by Ben Witherington III, although he still concludes that an abused Corinthian maxim is in view:

“There is a sense in which it is true: There really is freedom in Christ. But because that freedom is ‘in Christ’ there are some qualifications on it. Not all forms of behavior are beneficial to the body of Christ, much less to oneself. Paul might well have said to the Corinthians about *adiaphora* ‘all things are permitted,’ so long as they build up the body of Christ.”<sup>20</sup>

In his *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, David H. Stern does not go into great detail about this either, although his CJB/CJSB rendering (quoted above) does note that some statement is being quoted in 1 Corinthians 6:12. He concludes that “this was not a central principle of Sha’ul’s teaching but a saying in use among a group of Corinthians who would later have been called gnostic libertines. Sha’ul does not deny the principle.”<sup>21</sup> Nothing further is really said, which is unfortunate given how Stern’s resource has been one of the few widespread tools available for Messianic people needing aid on the Apostolic Scriptures.

Where did the expression *panta moi exestin* originate? While Paul could have said something like “Many things are permitted” for Believers, in his instruction to the Corinthians, in terms of much being genuinely permitted for redeemed people—which would have then been abused and manipulated—also to be recognized is how “Everything is permissible for me” (NIV) arose out of some contemporary classical philosophy or thought circulating in the Mediterranean world. Richard B. Hays interjects,

“The precise slogan ‘I am free to do anything’ is not found in contemporary philosophical writings, but in Epictetus there are numerous passages that discuss the freedom of the philosopher, using exactly the same verb Paul cites here. It is likely that the Corinthians have drawn upon this philosophical tradition to create a slogan expressing their radical understanding of freedom in Christ.”<sup>22</sup>

The works of both Epictetus and Dio Chrysostom, include sentiments likely present in much of a liberal and progressive society like Ancient Corinth, which those whom Paul addressed could have thought were entirely proper to follow, given the faulty premise that salvation of the internal person, meant that the external person did not have to be at all regulated in behavior:

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Hays, *1 Corinthians*, pp 102-103 notes how “The translator must decide where Paul is quoting a slogan and where he is offering his own rejoinder,” something which admittedly involves a degree of “guesswork” with value judgments to be made.

<sup>18</sup> David Prior, *The Message of 1 Corinthians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1985), 95; Garland, *1 Corinthians*, pp 226-229.

<sup>19</sup> Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 252.

<sup>20</sup> Witherington, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 168.

<sup>21</sup> Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 452.

<sup>22</sup> Hays, *1 Corinthians*, 101.

“It is the mark of a want of natural talent to spend much time on things relating to the body, as in exercising a great deal, in eating and drinking a great deal, and often emptying one’s bowels and copulating. These should be done in passing; and you should turn your attention to the care of your mind” (Epictetus *Discourses* 41).<sup>23</sup>

“Who, in fact, must exercise greater wisdom than he who is concerned with the weightiest matters; who, a keener sense of justice than he who is above the law; who, a more rigorous self-control than he to whom all things are permissible; who, a stouter courage than he upon the safety of everything depends?” (Dio Chrysostom *Discourses* 3.10).<sup>24</sup>

It is important to recognize from the surrounding cotext that nowhere does the Apostle Paul truly agree with the idea *panta moi exestin*. Paul may have previously told the Corinthians that many things were permissible for Believers, but if so, then this slogan was clearly a deliberate misinterpretation of it. He informs his Corinthian audience that “you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Yeshua the Messiah and in the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11). These are people who benefit from the resurrection power of God, the power that raised Yeshua from the dead (1 Corinthians 6:14) and is to give them the strength to submit themselves—especially their bodies—to Him (1 Corinthians 6:15-20) and to the ways of proper conduct. This would most especially include a continual resistance of ancient (temple) prostitution (1 Corinthians 6:16-17; cf. Genesis 2:24), which while technically legal in the Roman Empire and in Corinth, was not permitted for Messiah followers.

In 1 Corinthians 6:12 (NIV), Paul repeats what at least one influential group of Corinthian “Believers” has been saying, and then he issues correction to it:

THE CORINTHIANS	THE APOSTLE PAUL
“Everything is permissible for me”	— <i>but not everything is beneficial.</i>
“Everything is permissible for me”	— <i>but I will not be mastered by anything.</i>

Witherington astutely informs us, “It is possible to argue that Paul begins his *refutatio* in 6:12,” as “he begins to question and refute their answers in the form of these slogans.”<sup>25</sup> Paul has to confront these Corinthians’ logic head on, in getting them to be shaken out of their stupor that *panta moi exestin* or “Everything is permissible for me” (NIV).

Paul’s first response to *panta moi exestin* in 1 Corinthians 6:12a is: *all’ ou panta sumpherei* (ἀλλ’ οὐ πάντα συμφέρει), “but not all things are profitable” (NASU). The verb *sumpherō* (συνφέρω), “**to be advantageous, help, confer a benefit, be profitable/useful**” (BDAG)<sup>26</sup> has also been rendered with “helpful” (RSV), “beneficial” (NIV), or “expedient” (KJV); the point taken is that the Corinthians may think that all things they can do are permitted, but they will certainly find out that it will not prove to be for their benefit or usefulness. They might think that they have the freedom to do whatever they want, but many of the Corinthians may have had to find out the hard way that such thinking would be to their severe detriment. This would have been especially true in light of various sexual sins and devious actions being a major issue for the Corinthian assembly.

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<sup>23</sup> Epictetus: *The Discourses*, ed., Christopher Gill (London: Everyman, 1995), 302.

<sup>24</sup> Dio Chrysostom: *Roman History*, trans. J.W. Cohoon (1932-1951). Accessible online at <[http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Dio\\_Chrysostom/home.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Dio_Chrysostom/home.html)>.

<sup>25</sup> Witherington, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 167.

<sup>26</sup> BDAG, 960.

Paul's second response to *panta moi exestin* in 1 Corinthians 6:12b is: *all' ouk egō exousiasthēsomai hypo tinos* (ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐγὼ ἐξουσιασθήσομαι ὑπὸ τινος), "but I will not be brought under the power of any" (KJV), or "but not I will be mastered by anything" (Brown and Comfort).<sup>27</sup> Initially, this rebuttal of the Corinthians' slogan might seem a bit out of place. Some Corinthians say that they have the freedom to do whatever they want, and then Paul says that he "will not be mastered by anything" (NASU). Could Paul have been agreeing with the Corinthians, or is this an observation on what will ultimately happen to some Corinthian "Believers" who throw off all of God's instructions and commandments—much less what is in proper decorum—and live unfettered? *Paul would then be asserting how he, as a truly mature Believer, will not allow himself to be controlled by any power other than the Lord* (1 Corinthians 6:14, 19-20).

The reality is that people who think they can do whatever they want, ultimately become subjected under the dominance of sin, with their so-called freedom actually leading to bondage. As Fee describes, "There is a kind of self-deception that inflated spirituality promotes, which suggests to oneself that he/she is acting with freedom and authority, but which in fact is an enslavement of the worst kind—to the very freedom one thinks one has."<sup>28</sup> With some instruction on marriage and sexuality in immediate view in 1 Corinthians ch. 7, Hays offers the further appropriate observations:

"The danger is particularly great that the person seeking to exercise freedom through promiscuous sexual activity will end up as a slave to passion. The verb translated 'dominated' here [*exousiazō*, ἐξουσιάζω] is the same one that appears in 7:4, where husband and wife are said to 'have authority' over one another's bodies: by using this term Paul may be suggesting subtly that the 'wise' Corinthians who go to prostitutes are in effect surrendering control over themselves to the prostitutes."<sup>29</sup>

Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner further observe how for 1 Corinthians 6:12,

"Paul counters arrogant Corinthian claims to masterful independence with the ironic assertion that their supposed freedom will actually lead to a form of bondage! Far from being a master (with a right to do anything), they are themselves mastered and under the authority of something antithetical to pure devotion to Christ."<sup>30</sup>

When people throw off all guidelines of restraint, errantly thinking that "Everything is permitted for me" (TLV), the actions which they think they are now allowed to do, will ultimately enslave them—with their presumed liberty or freedom actually leading to bondage. It is as Yeshua Himself communicated, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin" (John 8:34). Salvation in Him, does not at all mean a license to do as one pleases. The Apostle Peter directed, "Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God" (1 Peter 2:16), as freedom from sin actually means service to the Lord, something elaborated on throughout the Apostle Paul's own instruction of Romans chs. 5-8.

Further in 1 Corinthians 8:9, Paul speaks rebukingly of "this liberty of yours," demonstrating how the Corinthian attitude can cause serious problems for the *ekklēsia* (discussed further).

Only those who have chosen not to read 1 Corinthians 6:12 carefully, with the wider issues in view, could conclude that Paul actually thinks the Torah or Law of Moses to be irrelevant to Believers' lives. In 1 Corinthians 5:13 earlier, Paul surely did quote from the Torah when it comes to ex-communicating sinners from the assembly: "But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES" (cf. Deuteronomy 17:7; 19:19; 22:21, 24; 24:7). For some reason or another, those in Corinth who advocated *panta moi exestin* had to be reasoned with largely on the basis of logic alone, and with whether what they did truly helped them in life.

**6:13** Having just cross-examined the Corinthian slogan *panta moi exestin* in 1 Corinthians 6:12, 1 Corinthians 6:13 further cross-examines the slogan regarding the stomach and food: "Food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food" [*ta brōmata tē koilia kai hē koilia tois brōmasin*, τὰ βρώματα τῆ κοιλία

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<sup>27</sup> Brown and Comfort, 591.

<sup>28</sup> Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 253.

<sup>29</sup> Hays, *1 Corinthians*, pp 103-104.

<sup>30</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, 254.

καὶ ἡ κοιλία τοῖς βρώμασιν]—but God will do away with both of them” (TLV). What we see, especially in view of the discussion about prostitution which will come (1 Corinthians 6:15-16), are some people who thought that their sexual conduct was no different than the normality of physical acts of eating, with many of the Corinthians not having as high a regard for the human body that they ought to have had (1 Corinthians 6:18-20). But while the slogan “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food” (RSV/NRSV/ESV) might have circulated to claim how bodily appetites for sex were little different than the appetite for food,<sup>31</sup> there are those who would conclude that some involvement between food, the stomach, and the kosher dietary laws was present.

In his commentary on 1 Corinthians, Craig Blomberg draws the conclusion, “The slogan of verse 13...could reflect [Paul’s] more specific reference to freedom from the Jewish dietary laws.”<sup>32</sup> Appearing in the *Jewish Annotated New Testament*, Shira Lander describes, “the claim may have developed as a reaction against Jewish dietary laws.”<sup>33</sup> Contrary to this, Stern takes “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food” (CJB/CJSB), as something which “is not said in order to oppose the Jewish dietary laws. Rather, the libertines offer it as a euphemistic argument against sexual self-restraint.”<sup>34</sup> Stern makes light of a Talmudic sentiment, which observes how in the future Kingdom of God, the need for physically eating will be replaced with how the presence of God Himself is all that will be required for nourishment:

“*A pearl in the mouth of Rab*: “The world to come is not like this world. In the world to come there is neither eating nor drinking nor procreating nor give and take nor envy nor hatred nor competition. But the righteous are enthroned with their crowns on their heads, enjoying the splendor of the Presence of God. For it is said, “And they beheld God and [it was that that they] ate and drank” (Exo. 24:11)” (b.*Berachot* 17a).<sup>35</sup>

There are more Christian interpreters than not, who will recognize that what was intended from the slogan, “Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food,” directly pertained to the Corinthians’ behavior in relation to sexuality and/or idolatry. Marion L. Soards states, “one should know that in antiquity many meals were served in pagan temples, and often the food itself was from the sacrifice(s) offered to a pagan god or goddess. In this connection, some Corinthians must have maintained that it made no difference what or where they ate.”<sup>36</sup> This is useful to note, in recognizing how the prostitution which Paul will rail against, could have easily been temple prostitution, although this is not required for the Corinthian slogan. Craig S. Keener details, and most appropriately so, how “‘Food for the stomach’ fits the common association of gluttony with intercourse; both were sometimes available in the banquets of the wealthy. This also represented the sort of logic by which some Greeks had justified promiscuity: as ‘food was for the stomach,’ so the body was designed for intercourse.”<sup>37</sup>

Among examiners, who are notably not too favorable to a post-resurrection validity for God’s Torah, are thankfully those who recognize how the issue is how these Corinthians were using this slogan to justify sexual misconduct, and they do not interject any notion of it somehow being associated with observing or not observing *kashrut*. Leon Morris states for 1 Corinthians 6:13, “Eating is a natural activity, and they apparently held that one bodily function is much like another. Fornication is as natural as eating. Paul rejects this with decision.”<sup>38</sup> David Prior, who is one who thinks that Paul probably agreed with the previous slogan “Everything is permissible for me” (1 Corinthians 6:12, NIV), does appreciably say regarding 1 Corinthians 6:13, “There is all the difference in the world between food, which is digested by the stomach and passed out

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<sup>31</sup> Philippians 3:19 is a place where the appetite is depicted in terms of self-indulgence and corruption: “whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.”

<sup>32</sup> Blomberg, 126.

<sup>33</sup> Lander, in *Jewish Annotated New Testament*, 296.

<sup>34</sup> Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 451.

<sup>35</sup> *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*.

<sup>36</sup> Soards, 129.

<sup>37</sup> Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, 57.

<sup>38</sup> Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 96.



through the bowels, and sexual intercourse, which affects the whole person and cannot be dismissed flippantly as a purely physiological phenomenon.”<sup>39</sup>

As the Apostle Paul would later write to the Romans, “for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17). Paul could have very easily told something similar to the Corinthians in his teachings to them in person, with them now being misunderstood via the slogan, “Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food.”

The continuing remark, *ho de Theos kai tautēn kai tatuta katargēsei* (ὁ δὲ θεὸς καὶ ταύτην καὶ ταῦτα καταργήσει), “but God will do away with both of them,” is sometimes thought to be a continuing part of the Corinthian slogan here, yet is more frequently considered to be Paul’s evaluation of what these Corinthians have been inappropriately concluding.

Various versions will render the verb *katargeō* (καταργέω) as “destroy” (KJV/NKJV, RSV/NRSV/ESV, NIV), although this might seem a little too hard, with the future resurrection and the transformation of human bodies in the eschaton to be detailed (1 Corinthians 6:14). Alternative renderings of the future active indicate *katargēsei* include “will do away” (NASU, HCSB), “will put an end” (CJB/CJSB), or “shall make useless” (YLT). This would concur with the lexical definition of *katargeō*, “to render idle, unemployed, inactive, inoperative” (Thayer).<sup>40</sup> The future resurrection should serve as an indication that the present human need for either food or sex will be substantially altered by Him, indicating that the abrogation of the need for food and sex are within the sovereign control of God Himself (1 Corinthians 15:50). Surely if such a future, radical alteration of the human need for physical sustenance, sits within the jurisdiction of the Creator—than far from these activities permitted to be unrestrained—instead behavior reflective of one’s Creator must be manifested in the present Earthly life and body. Blomberg is correct:

“There may be no need for stomachs in resurrection bodies that do not need to eat, but there most certainly will be resurrection bodies! And sexual immorality affects one’s entire body in a way that overeating cannot...”<sup>41</sup>

Paul directs the Corinthians, “The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body” (NRSV). That men and women, who place their trust in Yeshua the Messiah, must honor the Lord with the present human body—especially with more to come in the future—is something noted by Paul in Philippians 1:20: “[A]ccording to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but *that* with all boldness, Messiah will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.” Thiselton draws out the connection between the body (*sōma*, σῶμα) and stomach (*koilia*, κοιλία), and how while the two are not exactly the same, proper actions should be present, as there is a future transformation to come:

“The σῶμα is not to be equated with the κοιλία, but *somatic* life is absorbed and transformed in the resurrection of the σῶμα in such a way that continuity as well as change characterizes the relationship between the present σῶμα, i.e., present life *in its totality*, and the resurrection σῶμα, i.e., the transformation of the *whole* human self as part of the raised corporeity in Christ.”<sup>42</sup>

Thinking that fornication with prostitutes is a quantitatively indifferent behavior as eating food, was a big mistake of various Corinthians, who should have instead been treating their bodies not just as something to be controlled by the Lord ethically or morally—but to be changed by the Lord in the future eschaton.

Fee seems to argue that all of 1 Corinthians 6:13a represents the errant slogan of these Corinthians. The TNIV and 2011 NIV, different from the 1984 NIV, notably place “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both” in quotation marks “ ” to represent this. Fee concludes, “their reasoning went something like this: ‘Since everything is permitted, and since food is for the stomach and the stomach for food (after all, God will destroy them both in the end), and since all bodily appetites are pretty much alike, that means that the body is for sex and sex for the body—because God will destroy them both in

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<sup>39</sup> Prior, 98.

<sup>40</sup> Thayer, 336.

<sup>41</sup> Blomberg, 126.

<sup>42</sup> Thiselton, 463.

the end as well.’ But their conclusions are dead wrong—on both counts: The body is not for *porneia* but for the Lord; and it is not destined for destruction but for resurrection, the proof of which is Christ’s resurrection.”<sup>43</sup>

Whether the Corinthian slogan about food is “Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food,” or something slightly longer, the main point driven home by the Apostle Paul is “Anyhow, the body is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body” (CJB/CJSB). Even with significant changes to take place in the matter of food and the stomach in the future resurrection, human sexual behavior must conform to the standard of the Lord.

**6:14** The significance of the human body to the Creator is witnessed in Paul’s assertion, “By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also” (1 Corinthians 6:14, NIV). The subject of the doctrine of resurrection is thoroughly handled by Paul later in 1 Corinthians ch. 15.

The high regard that God as Creator has for the human body, was witnessed by the Messiah event, and how the Son was not just executed, but subsequently raised from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20). Being in Yeshua, redeemed men and women are innately connected to Him not just in terms of salvation from sins, but in the culmination of their salvation, which will be witnessed at the resurrection of the righteous and the redemption of the whole human being (Romans 8:11; Philippians 3:21). The redemption of the human body, and not just an immaterial consciousness, ran into stark contrast and conflict with Platonic dualism. The need to treat the human body, with a great deal of honor and respect, is true of both men and women equally (Ephesians 5:28-29). And, Soards appropriately draws our attention to how the power, which resurrected Yeshua from the dead, is already present in the lives of Believers, and is not just going to transform their bodies in the future eschaton—but is to transform their character and behavior in the present:

“They belong to the power of God, which raises them from the dead and which already works to transform them in the present. God has a clear claim on the believers; they do not merely have the freedom to make claims because of God. Indeed, God’s own mission manifests itself powerfully in resurrection and transformation of human life.”<sup>44</sup>

**6:15** If Believers are to experience the resurrection of the dead, the same as Yeshua experienced the resurrection Himself (1 Corinthians 6:14), then the importance of adhering to an upstanding code of sexuality and control, is greatly intensified. As Paul inquires, “Don’t you know that your bodies are members of Messiah? Shall I then take the members of Messiah and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be!” (1 Corinthians 6:15, TLV). Much of what it means for Believers to constitute the Body of Messiah, in different roles and responsibilities and giftings, will be elaborated on more fully, using the different limbs and organs of the human body as a frame of reference (1 Corinthians 12:12-27; cf. Romans 12:4-5). The singular term *melos* (μέλος), “**a part of the human body, member, part, limb**” (BDAG),<sup>45</sup> is notably expanded a bit in the REB rendering of 1 Corinthians 6:15:

“Do you not know that your bodies are limbs and organs of Christ? Shall I then take part of Christ’s body and make them over to a prostitute? Never!”

While commentators will often not discuss the issue of foods and the stomach (1 Corinthians 6:13) that much more, Soards is one who says, “Paul expresses mild shock that some Corinthians, aware of their freedom, work from the notion that all foods are fit for consumption to conclude that engaging in casual sex with a prostitute is a celebration of their freedom.”<sup>46</sup> While eating in general is what “Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food” (1 Corinthians 6:13)—and not adherence or non-adherence to the Torah’s dietary code—is actually what the slogan intended to use as a validation of sexual immorality, Soards has brought out how the dismissal of something seemingly unimportant like adhering to God’s instruction on diet, can lead to the dismissal of something much more important like adhering to God’s instruction on sexuality.

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<sup>43</sup> Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 255.

<sup>44</sup> Soards, 130.

<sup>45</sup> BDAG, 628.

<sup>46</sup> Soards, 131.

**6:16** The Apostle Paul makes a direct appeal to the Tanach or Old Testament, to get the various Corinthian men, who think that they are permitted to solicit prostitutes, to see what they are really doing. He says, "Don't you know that a man who joins himself to a prostitute becomes physically one with her? For the *Tanakh* says, 'The two will become one flesh'" (CJB/CJSB). In quoting from Genesis 2:24, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh," an appeal to marriage instructions (cf. Matthew 19:4-5) is relayed to the sexual act between a man and a female prostitute. Doubtlessly implied is how the sexual relations and marital bond, which are to be exclusive to husband and wife, are violated when a prostitute's services are solicited. The Jewish philosopher Philo spoke to the effect that the act of fornication would corrupt a person, appealing to Genesis 2:24 as well:

"But the sons of earth removing their minds from contemplation, and becoming deserters so as to fly to the lifeless and immovable nature of the flesh, 'for they two became one flesh,' [Genesis 2:24] as the lawgiver says, adulterated the excellent coinage, and abandoned the better rank which had been allotted to them as their own, and deserted to the worse rank, which was contrary to their original nature, Nimrod being the first to set the example of this desertion..." (*On the Giants* 65).<sup>47</sup>

Garland is entirely correct in drawing attention to how the Corinthian men soliciting prostitution was not just a physical affair. There were truly emotional and spiritual components to their sinful action to be acknowledged:

"Sexual intercourse entails the joining together of persons with all their spiritual associations and is not simply the coupling of bodies. The prostitute indiscriminately flings herself at chance customers; but the customer, when captured by her, is also put at her disposal...No prophylactic exists that can protect this unlawful union from extending its difficult tendrils into every part of a person's being. Using a prostitute is not a victimless crime in which no one gets hurt. This sin contaminates and breaches the union with Christ."<sup>48</sup>

Whether the prostitution sought by the Corinthian men was prostitution in general via some sort of brothel, or if it was temple prostitution, would not have mattered in terms of an entirely prohibited and utterly condemned action. But, if the Corinthian men, as presumed "Believers" in Israel's God and Messiah, did actually seek out temple prostitutes, then the immaturity of the Corinthians is further intensified. Joining with a temple prostitute in sexual relations was not just a mere act of intercourse and/or joining of intimate emotions; most frequently some kind of union with and/or worship of a god or goddess was also believed to be taking place during such intercourse.

**6:17** Rather than being joined to a street prostitute, or a temple prostitute, or even just a woman looking for sexual intercourse and treating her as though she were a prostitute—Paul issues an imperative word to the Corinthian men: "But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him" (1 Corinthians 6:17, TLV). Far from sexual intercourse with a prostitute providing the intimacy that such men ultimately were seeking, they are to seek it with their relationship with Israel's Messiah and King. The need for God's own to join with Him, in relationship and fidelity, is something rooted deeply in the Tanach Scriptures:

"They will ask for the way to Zion, *turning* their faces in its direction; they will come that they may join themselves to the LORD *in* an everlasting covenant that will not be forgotten" (Jeremiah 50:5).

"Many nations will join themselves to the LORD in that day and will become My people. Then I will dwell in your midst, and you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you" (Zechariah 2:11).

Also rooted deeply in the Tanach is the judgment that will come upon God's own, when they join themselves to false gods and idols:

"So Israel joined themselves to Baal of Peor, and the LORD was angry against Israel" (Numbers 25:3).

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<sup>47</sup> *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*, 157.

<sup>48</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 233.

“Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone” (Hosea 4:17).<sup>49</sup>

**6:18** The answer to the sin problem here is, “Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body” (1 Corinthians 6:18, ESV). It has been suggested that *Pheugete* (Φεύγετε), a present active imperative plural, could be a continual activity to be conducted, consistent with what is stated later in 1 Corinthians 10:14: “Therefore, my beloved, flee [*pheugete*] from idolatry.” Memories of Ancient Israel’s lack of fleeing from idolatry—that “you might make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they would play the harlot with their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and someone might invite you to eat of his sacrifice” (Exodus 34:15)—might be in view. Also to be invoked could surely be how the Patriarch Joseph fled from Potiphar’s wife, when she demanded that he have intercourse with her: “She caught him by his garment, saying, ‘Lie with me!’ And he left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside” (Genesis 39:12).

There are certainly many warnings in both the Tanach (i.e., Proverbs 5:3; 6:23-7:27) and Apocrypha (i.e., Sirach 19:2), about the corruption of sexual immorality and prostitution. In full alignment with Paul’s word in 1 Corinthians 6:16, is a statement appearing in the Pseudepigrapha: “Accordingly, my children, flee from sexual promiscuity...” (*Testament of Reuben* 5:5).<sup>50</sup> And as Sirach 2:3 from the Apocrypha would further direct, also in alignment with Paul’s instruction, “Cleave to him and do not depart, that you may be honored at the end of your life.”

Some take issue with the presence of “*other*” in 1 Corinthians 6:18,<sup>51</sup> which has been frequently added by translators to *ho ean poiēsē anthrōpos ektos tou sōmatos estin* (ὁ ἐὰν ποιήσῃ ἄνθρωπος ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματος ἔσται), which the NRSV has as, “Every sin that a person commits is outside the body.” This might be on account of choosing to identify this as yet another Corinthian slogan, as the HCSB actually does place, “Every sin a person can commit is outside the body,” in quotation marks to indicate this “ ”.

When not taken as a Corinthian slogan, and with the inclusion of “*other*” in one’s translation, then by saying “All other sins people commit are outside their bodies” (TNIV), Paul would necessarily be communicating something in view of the fornication practiced and prostitution solicited. In the estimation of Garland, “The context and rhetorical tone suggest that Paul wants to draw out the distinctive character of sexual sin compared to every other sin a person could possibly commit.”<sup>52</sup> He further notes how a sin such as “drunkenness does not have the capacity to make a person one flesh with alcohol. This one-flesh union is true only of the sex act...In the context, sex with a prostitute severs the union with Christ and sabotages its resurrection destiny.”<sup>53</sup> The sin of prostitution, here with a Corinthian man joining with a woman paid for sex, is an internal sin committed against one’s personal self for sure—but it is most especially a sin committed against the God who is to not only inhabit a person via His Spirit, but has provided to His people access to the resurrection power which raised Yeshua the Messiah from the dead.

Keener makes the important observation, “Sexual intimacy is difficult to separate from emotional intimacy, and such intimacy flourishes in the context of vulnerability and trust, hence commitments.”<sup>54</sup> The being of “one spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:18), is to occur in one’s relationship with the Lord, through prayer, meditation upon His Word, and in times of worship. *These are the times when His own are to be candid with Him about their vulnerability as mortals, and their need for reliance upon Him.* Such personal disclosure is a matter to be left between the created and the Creator; it is not to be something taking place between a man and a prostitute, who can never make up for God as Heavenly Father and King.

**6:19** A redeemed individual is to look at himself as being a temple or sanctuary for the Holy Spirit, and not as a place for prostitutes to cohabit: “Don’t you know that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who

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<sup>49</sup> Also to be considered could be Hosea 4:14.

<sup>50</sup> Kee, “Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol 1, 784.

<sup>51</sup> Hays, *1 Corinthians*, 105.

<sup>52</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 237.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.

<sup>54</sup> Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, 60.

is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own” (1 Corinthians 6:19, HCSB). While this word would be critical direction toward those in Corinth who had solicited prostitutes, the pronouns in the source text of 1 Corinthians 6:19 are notably in the plural, an indication that Paul is speaking collectively to the Corinthians, and how there are certainly many more applications of Believers being the temple or sanctuary of the Holy Spirit beyond that of being sexually moral.<sup>55</sup> It is worthwhile remembering what happened to the Jerusalem Temple during the Maccabean crisis of the Second Century B.C.E.:

“For the temple was filled with debauchery and reveling by the Gentiles, who dallied with harlots and had intercourse with women within the sacred precincts, and besides brought in things for sacrifice that were unfit” (2 Maccabees 6:4).

The presence of the Lord within His people, as though one’s body is a temple, is something partially witnessed in the Pseudepigrapha. *Testament of Joseph* 10:3 astutely states, “And where the Most High dwells, even if envy befall someone, or slavery or false accusation, the Lord who dwells with him on account of his self-control not only will rescue him from these evils, but will exalt him and glorify him as he did for me.”<sup>56</sup>

**6:20** Even though it was important for Paul to explain to the Corinthians how their bodies will be resurrected in the eschaton (1 Corinthians 6:14), and how their bodies were not to be viewed as members of a prostitute (1 Corinthians 6:15-16) but instead as part of the Messiah (1 Corinthians 6:17), and just now how they are to view themselves as a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19)—the real crux of the matter is how “you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.” The implication is that the Corinthians’ redemption has only come about by the sacrifice of Yeshua (cf. Ephesians 1:7), and as such they must demonstrate proper conduct via their bodies. It is not a surprise at all why some versions offer slight paraphrases of 1 Corinthians 6:20: “for God bought you with a high price” (NLT) or “You were quite an expensive purchase!” (Kingdom New Testament).<sup>57</sup>

**1 Corinthians 6:12-20 application** One of the questions that readers reviewing 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 might legitimately ask, is why there have not been more direct quotations from the Tanach or Old Testament, and instead far more indirect allusions to Israel’s Scriptures and sentiments witnessed in Second Temple Judaism. The Apostle Paul certainly believed that the throwing off of all restraints, by various Corinthians, via the slogan of “All things are permissible for me” or *panta moi exestin* (1 Corinthians 6:12), was wrong. Just as wrong was the slogan “Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food” (1 Corinthians 6:13), as though men having intercourse with prostitutes was quantitatively indifferent than eating. The arguments made, while Paul could have made a direct appeal to the Tanach and how sexual debauchery corrupted many in Ancient Israel, instead focused on the resurrection of Yeshua (1 Corinthians 6:14), Believers’ connection to the future resurrection, and Believers’ being like limbs and organs of Yeshua’s body (1 Corinthians 6:15). To engage in prostitution is to be like corrupting God’s own Temple (1 Corinthians 6:18-19). Holiness or sanctification does not end at one’s immaterial person, but is to be manifested in physical acts performed by the body as well (1 Corinthians 6:20).

Examiners of Paul’s letter have certainly had to reason through why Paul chose not to make more appeals to the Tanach in a passage like 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. It is possible that more appeals to the Tanach were made in the non-extant first letter (1 Corinthians 5:9), and now more “Does it make sense what you are doing?” logic had to be employed—as a group of people who think “All things are permitted for me” might be more prone to entrench their sinful behavior, when told they must follow God’s Instruction and commandments. Ciampa and Rosner suggest,

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<sup>55</sup> Cf. Soards, 133.

V. 19 in the Greek reads *ē ouk oidate hoti to sōma humōn naos tou en humin Hagio Pneumatos estin ou echete apo Theou, kai ouk este heautōn* (ἢ οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι τὸ σῶμα ὑμῶν ναὸς τοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν ἁγίου πνεύματος ἐστίν οὐ ἔχετε ἀπὸ θεοῦ, καὶ οὐκ ἐστε ἑαυτῶν). The Brown and Comfort interlinear has noted the placement of plural pronouns and possessive pronouns by a degree ° sign:

“or do you° not know that the body of you° a sanctuary of the in you° Holy Spirit is, whom you° have from God, and you° are~not your° own” (Brown and Comfort, 591).

<sup>56</sup> Kee, “Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol 1, pp 821-822.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Romans 3:24-25; 12:1.

“Some have questioned the relevance of the Old Testament to Paul’s ethical teaching on the grounds that Paul overlooks the opportunity to quote Scripture in such a context. He could have cited any number of texts forbidding prostitution, premarital sex, or extramarital sex. The fallacy with such a reasoning is that the most fundamental reason someone is opposed to something will not necessarily be made explicit in their arguments against it. Paul’s arguments in 1 Corinthians 6 against the use of prostitutes in effect presuppose that prostitution is wrong. Paul is like a passenger trying to convince the driver who is speeding to slow down with appeals to road safety, expensive fines, no need to hurry, and so on. The use of such proofs does not betray a lack of interest in the law; even if left unmentioned, the relevant law might rest at the heart of their opposition.”<sup>58</sup>

Thankfully, we get the impression from later Pauline correspondence that he was able to get many of the Corinthians to turn from their sinful ways:

“For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it—for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while—I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to *the point of* repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to *the will of* God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. For the sorrow that is according to *the will of* God produces a repentance without regret, *leading* to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death” (2 Corinthians 7:7-10).

When evaluating the Corinthian slogans “All things are permissible for me” (1 Corinthians 6:12, PME) or “Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food” (1 Corinthians 6:13), what it manifested itself in was a gross disrespect for the human body. The human body was to be regarded as something intended for the Lord’s intimate presence and for services of faith rendered unto Him—all with the future resurrection and transformation of the human person in view! *The truth is that not all is permitted, nor is immoral sexual conduct little different than eating food.*

Dualism, or more specifically Platonic dualism, would have advocated that the immaterial human consciousness was trapped inside of the prison of the human body, and that death was something to be greatly anticipated, with the soul released into the great beyond.<sup>59</sup> A future reanimation of human remains, via the resurrection, was not at all to be anticipated. This is where there were conflicts in the early Body of Messiah, as many Greeks and Romans coming to faith had difficulty with concepts of a personal eschatology culminating in a bodily resurrection. When it is thought that only the redemption of an immaterial consciousness is important, and not the entire human being—then it can be errantly thought that with the redemption of such an immaterial consciousness accomplished, what one chose to do with the physical body did not really matter. Paul made it contrastingly clear: “**glorify God in your body**” (1 Corinthians 6:20). Prior further observes,

“If the human body is thus denigrated and trivialized, it is logically possible to adopt one of two-mutually contradictory attitudes to it: either batter it into total subjection and ruthlessly control all your physical appetites, or let the body have its full scope and satisfy every whim and fancy, because it is of no moral significance anyway, and certainly does not affect soul or spirit.”<sup>60</sup>

Fee makes a specific assault against some of the ancient dualism, which has introduced itself into contemporary Christianity:

“[T]his 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. The pagan view of physical

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<sup>58</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, pp 261-262.

<sup>59</sup> Consult the FAQ, “Dualism.” Also consult the relevant sections of the publication *To Be Absent From the Body* by J.K. McKee. Also useful to be considered are the observations made in Beth Felker Jones, “Body,” in *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, pp 105-109; Scott B. Rae and J.P. Moreland, “Dualism, Anthropological,” in *Ibid.*, pp 247-248.

<sup>60</sup> Prior, 95.

existence finds its way into Christian theology in a number of subtle ways, including the penchant on the part to 'save souls' while caring little for people's material needs."<sup>61</sup>

Indeed, too many of us forget how the Psalmist exclaims the great creation by God of the human body:

"For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, *and* skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Your book were all written the days that were ordained *for me*, when as yet there was not one of them" (Psalm 139:13-16).

Unfortunately, when we look at the slogan "Everything is permissible for me" (1 Corinthians 6:12, NIV) that the Apostle Paul refutes, we see that we have much of the same situation today in modern Christianity. There are people who actually think that once they "get saved" and have been forgiven of their sins, and since they have the covering of grace, they do not have to live in real accordance with any commandments or instructions or protocol—and perhaps are not even subject to some kind of Divine correction. We can legitimately wonder if such individuals are indeed spiritually regenerated, but ultimately God only knows if they are truly born again or not.

What we do know is that as Believers **we each have the responsibility to obey the Lord and not fall prey to the kinds of gross immoralities** in which many of the Corinthians participated. The Lord's standard of holiness, godliness, and permissible living is certainly defined for us within the commandments of the Torah. The Torah clearly defines what sin is and what He considers acceptable and unacceptable. By obeying the Torah, we find ourselves able to experience the blessings of God—rather than the penalties, curses, *and* pain that follow from disobedience to Him.

The following Corinthian slogan, "Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food" (1 Corinthians 6:13), did not have anything to do with the dietary code of Moses' Teaching. But, thinking that one's sexual misconduct is little different than eating food, is rooted in a dualism which will conclude that God cares nothing at all for what people eat. The contemporary Christian dualism of today, which cares very little for physical actions, and can over-emphasize salvation of one's immaterial consciousness, is very quick to dismiss kosher as having any relevance for Messiah followers. ***Such dualism is an ideology which needs to be opposed.*** While eating or not eating unclean meats is hardly at the same level of offense as sexual immorality or soliciting prostitution, when people completely dismiss the idea that God as Creator can tell His people what not to eat, they can open a door to thinking that other physical actions matter little to Him as well, and perhaps later that "All things are permitted for me" (1 Corinthians 6:12).

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<sup>61</sup> Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 266.