

PREFACE

The passage before us—vv13-14 and, as before, the thrust of this entire paragraph—has been and remains a healthy reminder for your humble teacher. For you see, if I err in how I perceive my association to God it is to come down too heavily on the “spiritual” (that is, more mystical) side of that association, rather than the physical side. It is far more comfortable for me to think of myself as a spiritual being communing with God by means of His Holy Spirit, than as a physical being belonging to Him. I am certainly not an ascetic ([treating the body with rigorous self-denial, abstinence, even punishment](#)); it is just more natural and comfortable for me to think in spiritual, rather than physical terms.

But the apostle Paul in this passage—again, the extended passage—is making the point that the body does indeed have a role to play in this association and relationship with God. Influenced by the eloquent and charismatic Greek philosophers of their day, as well as the Corinthian culture and society, there were some in the church who thought of the body as essentially a throw-away. Considering themselves to now be “spiritual” beings, they saw the body as something necessary for living, but as unimportant, even dispensable in their relationship with God in Christ.

This is why they could spout such slogans as “All things are permissible for me.” By their lights, since they were now “spiritual,” whatever they did with their body—food, drink, sex—didn’t matter, because at death the body would decay and disintegrate. The body, for them was no longer important—a non-issue. We might respond to this with, “I consider myself to be spiritual, and I don’t think of the body this way. So why did they? Besides, what about the resurrection of believers?”

In Chapter Fifteen of this letter we will be addressing in detail the issue of both Christ’s and believers’ resurrection. But it is clear from Chapter Fifteen that there was a vocal and persuasive group in the Corinth church that denied the resurrection of believers.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:12.

How did this come about? Where did they get this idea?

Gordon Fee: ...it reflects the conflict between them and Paul over what it means to be *pneumatikos* (“a Spirit person”). In their view, by the reception of the Spirit, and especially the gift of tongues, [\[they believed\]](#) they had already entered the true “spirituality” that is to be; [\[Remember when Paul was tweaking their nose in Chapter Four about them thinking too much of](#)

themselves? “You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and indeed, I wish that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you” (1 Corinthians 4:8).] [they believed they] already had begun a form of angelic existence in which the body was unnecessary and unwanted, and would finally be discarded altogether. Thus for them life in the Spirit meant a final ridding oneself of the body, not because it was evil but because it was inferior and beneath them; the idea that the body would be raised would have been anathema [detestable, cursed].

Knowing this helps us understand what is going on in Chapter Six—especially why he seems to jump to the topics of food in v13 and resurrection in v14. Do not fear; the apostle knows where he is going with this.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:12-14.

v13

Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them.

Verse 13, like the two sentences in v12, begins by stating the slogan—i.e., the Corinthian’s rationale for their philosophical position. They were saying, *We have a body and it requires food. But this is just a bodily function necessary for the here and now. All of this is passing away—in fact, we have already risen above this, and now dwell on a “spiritual” plane. What I do with the body means nothing.*

Paul cites this slogan about food because, to put it in hipster terms, he’s hip to their jive. He understands there is far more to this than just food; in fact, there is far more to this—disturbingly so—than their citing this to excuse their illicit sexual behavior. The Corinthians have detached the body from the spirit and mind. Paul, in this extended passage, is here to put them back together.

I think it is easy for us to imagine why and how the Corinthians have arrived at this skewed perspective on the body and spirit, for the same process is going on all around us. When Paul was with them he taught them from the fundamentals of the gospel, and it all made sense to them. Then after he left, the teaching and philosophies of their environment started to make sense to them as well. If both made sense, but were in conflict with each other, how do they reconcile the difference?

In politics (as in a marriage) it can sometimes work to compromise; neither side gets all they want, but the result, while not perfect, is workable. So the Corinthians applied this process to the conflict between their faith and the world: *If both make sense, let’s just blend the best of each into one.* They took the indwelling Holy Spirit from the gospel, but they enhanced that with the Grecian philosophies of “spirituality.” This led to a reevaluation of resurrection; if they were already spiritual beings, risen above the foibles and weight of the flesh, then they must have already

risen above the need for resurrection. They were already on too lofty a plane to require that. Whatever the body required—food, drink, sex—was now of no consequence for them.

...but God will do away with both of them.

This corrupt and worthless body would disintegrate at death, so what happened to it had no bearing on their spiritual condition, or their eternity.

Paul is about to set them straight. They were making three fundamental mistakes:

1. The gospel cannot be compromised with the world's philosophies. If there is conflict, the gospel of Christ must win. Period.
2. There *will* be a resurrection of the believer's current body.
3. Even prior to death and the resurrection, the body is holy and sanctified, belonging to and for the use of Christ in the here and now.

The apostle will spend the rest of this paragraph correcting these misconceptions. And he begins by refuting this business about the body (and use thereof) being of no consequence.

Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body.

Paul does not care about the issue of food and the belly; he only cares about how the Corinthians are using arguments such as this to rationalize destructive sexual immorality in their lives. His immediate response mirrors the structure of their slogan:

slogan: Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food...

response: the body...is for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body.

As such, his immediate response to their slogan is not fully formed; it does not stand well on its own—just what does that mean, “the Lord is for the body”?—but it simply cues up the explanation that follows.

The Corinthians had adopted the philosophy that not only was it better to be spiritual than physical, but they had detached the two, claiming the body was too insignificant to even bother with. I have often cited the fact that the Son of God came to earth not as a ball of glowing energy, but as flesh, because glowing energy could not be nailed to a cross. In not just the resurrection, but in His very birth (incarnation = in flesh) God affirms the importance of the body.

We can also return to creation, and the Garden of Eden. God placed the man and woman in charge of everything; they were “the pinnacle of His creation” (Grudem). Were they made by Him as glowing balls of energy? No, they were made physical, flesh and blood. The relationship Christ has with His church is illustrated not just by the spiritual and emotional union of husband and wife, but by the *physical* union, the “oneness” of the husband and wife.

After He created the physicality of creation, including man, God declared it “very good” (Genesis 1:31). From Jesus we know that God is spirit (John 4:24), yet when the Godhead created man and woman “in Our image,” they made them as physical, fleshly beings.

Read Genesis 1:26-27.

Even before we consider the importance of the bodily resurrection of believers, we can see that, for His reasons, their bodies are important to God’s economy of salvation, sanctification, and eternity.

v14

Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power. When we read what the Lord has in store for the eternity of our resurrected bodies, it is clear that the new heaven and new earth, and new Jerusalem, will be for *physical* bodies. Why would the Lord bother resurrecting our bodies if it were not?

Read Revelation 21:21-27.

Read Revelation 22:1-4.

In this extended passage, one thing Paul is trying to accomplish is to pull the Corinthians back to a sanctified life in the here and now. That is, *If you are so “spiritual,” why aren’t you living that way?* He is trying to get them to understand that the body is not just important for eternity, but in the here and now—both of which these Corinthians were rejecting!

We will be digging into this further as we proceed through the passage, but I want to close with a look at the here-and-now aspects of this. Paul brings up the issue of the resurrection which, chronologically, deals with the end times. But his emphasis is not on that, but on the here and now—how we are to be living *now*, in light of this future resurrection. Notice the verb tenses.

v15: your bodies **are** members of Christ... Shall I make them members of a prostitute?

v18: Flee immorality. (now)

v19: your body **is** a temple of the Holy Spirit

v20: Glorify God in your body. (now)

Let’s close with what Paul has to say about this in his letter to the Romans. Note how he, here as well, ties together the believer’s (future) resurrection with his behavior in the here and now.

Read Romans 6:1-14.