

**PREFACE**

In the course of this discussion in Chapter Six, I have said more than once that God's word draws a correlation between idolatry and sexual immorality. On the surface we might wonder, *What does worshiping an idol have to do with sexual immorality?* Throughout Scripture the two invariably go together. While Moses was on the mountain receiving the Ten Commandments, the children of Israel made a golden calf and began worshiping it.

**Read Exodus 32:6.**

That Hebrew word translated "play" (*sahaq*) can also be translated "caress," as it is in Genesis 26, where it says that King Abimelech looked out a window and saw that "Isaac was caressing his wife Rebekah." The prophet Hosea gives us a strong and colorful picture of how the two go together.

**Read Hosea 4:11-14.**

Finally, in His message to Pergamum, recorded in The Revelation, Christ associates the two.

**Read Revelation 2:14.**

In our passage today the apostle Paul closes out his rebuttal to those Corinthians who were claiming that, being "spiritual," to them the physical body—and whatever one *did* with that body—was of no consequence.

Paul's argument is this: The sin of sexual immorality is a unique sin against our own body—which is at the same time a unique sin against God (cf. [Genesis 39:9](#)), since He *owns* our body.

**v18**

In our last session we examined the opening command of v18: "Flee (sexual immorality)." I could not find any passages in God's word that counsel to debate or argue with sin, to calmly explain to the tempter what a naughty boy he is and persuade him that righteousness is far more profitable than sin.

*John MacArthur:* When we are in danger of such immorality, we should not argue or debate or explain, and we certainly should not try to rationalize. We are not to consider it a spiritual challenge to be met but a spiritual trap to be escaped. We should get away as fast as we can.

The closest I could find to counsel *not* to flee when faced with immorality was that familiar passage in Ephesians.

### Read Ephesians 6:12-13.

I take from this that the only time we should not flee is when we have strapped on the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the boots of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the word of God. Even then, it does not tell us to *initiate* battle, but to “stand firm.” Absent any of that armor, we are to run for our lives, as Joseph did ([Genesis 39:12](#)).

*Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.*

The rest of v18 is, as the commentators agree, “a notorious crux” (“a difficult problem; a puzzling thing”). Fee reports that, according to one scholar, “as many as 20 or 30 solutions have been offered.” So let’s work our way through the first twenty of those... just kidding.

**Note:** Keep in mind that this word translated “body,” in this context, means just that. Paul is not spiritualizing the flesh; he is not referring to the person’s soul or the entirety of his or her being. He is talking about the body itself—as Garland puts it, “the corporeality of human life, its physical aspect; the locus where we experience life, death, sickness and sexuality.” That is, the physical body: that organization of flesh one sees in the mirror.

The human mind can be an odd thing. It is natural to us, after reading something like this, for our mind to start compiling a list of potential sins, wondering if what Paul says is correct that “every other sin...is outside the body.” At the same time we begin mentally compiling ways that sexual sin is indeed “against [our] own body.”

But that’s not Paul’s point. Let’s stick with *his* train of thought, rather than our own.

- In v13 he wrote that “the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord.”
- In v15 he states that the body of every Christian is a “member of Christ.” He goes on to express horror that any believer would even consider removing their body from Christ to join it to a prostitute.
- Why this sin is uniquely “against the body” is stated in v16: “...do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her?”
- In contrast to that, Paul states in v17, “the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.” By mentioning “one spirit” he has not left the physicality of the body; he hasn’t changed topics. Because in v19 he ties the two—body and spirit—together.

*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God,*

This idea of the physical body as a temple, or sanctuary, is not something God invented for man. It began with Christ Jesus.

**Read John 2:18-22.**

If the earthly Jesus' body was a temple, then for Whom was it a temple? John, later in his gospel, tells us.

**Read John 14:10-11.**

*D. A. Carson:* The Father and the incarnate Son enjoy unique mutual indwelling. Therefore it is the human body of Jesus that uniquely manifests the Father, and becomes the focal point of the manifestation of God to man, the living abode of God on earth, the fulfillment of all the temple meant, and the center of all true worship... In this "temple" the ultimate sacrifice would take place; within three days of death and burial, Jesus Christ, the true temple, would rise from the dead.

So there the pattern is set for the physical body to be a temple of God—for Jesus, the Father; for believers, the Holy Spirit. As a temple of God, Jesus would rise bodily from the dead within three days; believers will rise bodily from the dead at His return.

*and that you are not your own?*

In practical terms, what does it mean that our "body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in [us], whom [we] have from God"? It means that our body does not belong to us. Laterally, horizontally, the believer's body belongs to his or her spouse—if one has a spouse. Vertically, eternally, the believer's body belongs to the God who dwells within.

Now we begin to see the full ramifications, the true insidious depth of sexual sin. Here is how Fee expresses it:

In fornicating with a prostitute a man removes his body (which is a temple of the Spirit, purchased by God and destined for resurrection) from union with Christ and makes it a member of her body, thereby putting it under her "mastery" (v12b; cf. 7:4). Every other sin is apart from (i.e., not "in") the body in this singular sense... Thus the unique nature of sexual sin is not so much that one sins against one's own self, but that one sins against one's own body, as *viewed in terms of its place in redemptive history*.

In that simple phrase, “you are not your own,” is the fullness of lordship defined. Lordship is not just preferring one over another or publicly declaring partisanship (as if joining a political party); it not *just* obedience—it is that and far more. Lordship is turning over every aspect of one’s life—body, mind, spirit, and soul; choices, actions, dreams, and aspirations—to its rightful owner.

### Read Romans 14:5-9.

Lordship is far more than mere allegiance; it is *ownership*.

v20

*For you have been bought with a price:*

In v20 Paul unabashedly—and tellingly—uses the language of the slave market. In our minds we can dress up our relationship with God in the finery of voluntary servanthood—as if we graciously serve Him out of our adoration and worship. That can be true, but it is thin. It can take many years for this truth to reach maturity in our lives, but we must serve Him because He *bought* us—lock, stock and barrel. That makes us not voluntary servants or employees, but purchased, obligated, slaves. We serve and obey Him not because He has been kind to us, but because He is our Lord and Master.

### Read Galatians 2:20.

In this passage before us, Paul clearly has in mind the cross, and the shed blood of Christ. So the same point is made by the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders in their praise of the Lamb in The Revelation.

### Read Revelation 5:9.

*therefore glorify God in your body.*

**Sidebar:** The KJVs have after “body,” “and in your spirit, which are God’s,” text taken from the *Textus Receptus* manuscript. Fee suggests that this may have been added as the result of early Christian liturgy. Garland writes, “The shorter reading has the strongest manuscript support from early witnesses and has a more forceful rhetorical punch [i.e., Paul’s point is about the *body*, not the spirit]. A scribe would have been more prone to add the longer reading than to drop it. This longer reading garbles Paul’s point, which places emphasis on the Christian’s body.”

Please turn to the first chapter of Philipppians.

The Corinthians, considering themselves now “spiritual” beings, wanted to dispense with the body. Their gospel had been infused with the philosophies of the Hellenist culture, and the corrosive philosophies of the Corinthian society. Instead of standing firm on the true gospel of Christ, they found themselves slipping and sliding into a number of spurious doctrines—one of which was that what they did with the physical body (such as sex with prostitutes) meant nothing. Being “spiritual,” they had now risen *above* the body (they believed) into a state that, in truth, they would not realize until the return of Christ.

But the apostle Paul, even though he was walking by the Holy Spirit, and was probably more “spiritual” than any of the Corinthians would ever be, could still say about the body, as he did in his letter to the Philippians,

**What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.** (Philippians 1:18-20; emphasis added)