

# 1 CORINTHIANS 6:14

August 21, 2022

Brad Norman

Turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 6. We're approaching the end of the second major section of this letter, which covers chapters 5–6. The main focus in these chapters is on the theme of church purity. That's what we saw in chapter 5, where Paul rebuked the Corinthian believers for tolerating a man who was committing incest with his stepmother. They needed to remove this man from the church to maintain their purity and hopefully motivate him to repent. Then in the beginning of chapter 6 Paul dealt with the sin of Christians taking each other to civil court. Instead of taking their disputes before the unrighteous, they should have found a wise believer to serve as an arbitrator. Otherwise they would have ruined their testimony before the world.

Then at the end of chapter 6 Paul returned to the theme of sexual immorality and more specifically the sin of prostitution. Two weeks ago we began looking at the second half of this chapter, which starts in verse 12. Look at what Paul wrote in this verse: "Everything is permissible for me,' but not everything is beneficial. 'Everything is permissible for me,' but I will not be mastered by anything." In this verse Paul gave two quotations from the Corinthian believers that are exactly the same. And this repeated quotation shows that they thought they could live however they wanted. Now Paul certainly taught that we're no longer under the Old Testament law. But this doesn't mean that we're not under any kind of law. In chapter 9 and verse 21 he said, "I am not without God's law but under the law of Christ." We still need to obey the commands of Jesus and the apostles, who were his official representatives.

So in chapter 6 and verse 12 Paul gave two responses to this misunderstanding of Christian freedom. His first response was that "not everything is beneficial." And this Greek word for beneficial usually refers to what is profitable or useful for other people. Paul was saying that not everything we could do is beneficial to others. And this is a very helpful way to think about our actions and our attitudes. There are many things we could do that would make us feel good and bring us pleasure. But we need to humble ourselves and do what's best for people around us. But doing what's best for them doesn't necessarily mean bringing them pleasure. We need to define what is beneficial based on God's Word instead of people's feelings. If we're committing sin with other people, then we're basically bringing divine judgment on them.

But what about sins that we commit all by ourselves? Well, Paul's second response in verse 12 is helpful in this regard. He said, "I will not be mastered by anything." Now before we got saved we used to be mastered by sin. But then God set us free from slavery to sin and made us his slaves. So when Paul said that he didn't want to be mastered by anything, he was implying an obvious exception. He knew that Jesus was his master, and so we shouldn't return to our old master. We shouldn't let sin gain any kind of foothold in

our lives. Instead we need to submit to God's authority at all times. We should strive to live in continual obedience to him.

Then in verse 13 quoted the Corinthian believers once again. Look at what he said here: "Food is for the stomach and the stomach for food,' and God will do away with both of them. However, the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." So this quoted statement has two parts to it, and the second part is the reverse of the first part. The first part basically says that the purpose of food is to be eaten and digested in our stomachs. Then the second part basically says that the purpose of the stomach is to digest food. In other words, food and the stomach go together; they're designed for each other.

Now I don't see any reason to think that Paul disagreed with this statement. In fact, he taught elsewhere that we can eat anything we want to eat. In 1 Timothy 4:3 he described some false teachers and said that "they forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods that God created to be received with gratitude by those who believe and know the truth." Then Paul said in verse 4 that "everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving." So Paul was basically saying that we're not under the Old Testament food laws anymore. But we need to be careful not to abuse our freedom in this area. We need to make sure that we don't love food more than we love God. In Philippians 3:19 Paul talked about the enemies of Christ and said that "their god is their stomach." Some people love food so much that they have very little self-control at the dinner table. So they overeat and become gluttons. Proverbs 23:21 warns us that "the glutton will become poor," and Proverbs 28:7 tells us that "a companion of gluttons humiliates his father."

So the Bible teaches clearly enough that gluttony is a sin. It's true that God made food and our stomachs for each other, but ultimately he created them for his glory. We need to make sure that we please him even in the way that we eat. Gluttony leads to poor health, and we're going to have a hard time serving the Lord effectively if we're in poor health. But in 1 Corinthians 6:13 Paul went in a different direction when he responded to the quoted statement about food and the stomach. He said that "God will do away with both of them." The Greek verb here just refers to bringing something to an end so that it no longer exists. So apparently Paul was saying that one day in the future God will get rid of food and our stomachs, and we won't be eating anymore.

But I can't find any evidence in Scripture that we're ever going to stop eating for good. In fact, what I see in Scripture is quite the opposite. Listen to what Jesus told his disciples in Luke 22:29–30: "I bestow on you a kingdom, just as my Father bestowed one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom. And you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." So when we're reigning with Jesus in his kingdom, we're going to be eating and drinking. And we'll be doing that in our resurrected bodies. In Philippians 3:20–21 Paul said that "our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly wait for a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humble condition into the likeness of his glorious body." So our bodies will be like the body Jesus had after he rose from the dead. But we know from Luke 24 that Jesus ate food after his resurrection. Verses 42–43 tell us that he ate a piece of broiled fish in the presence of his disciples.

So I really don't think Paul was teaching in 1 Corinthians 6:13 that God is going to get rid of food and our stomachs in the future. It's much more likely that this statement is still part of the quotation. Ancient Greek didn't have quotation marks, so we have to rely completely on the context to help us spot quotations and figure out how long they are. And in this case the evidence seems clear that the quotation includes this statement. That's how the NET Bible and the New International Version handle this verse. So the Corinthian believers were the ones who believed that God would do away with food and the stomach. But they were wrong. Now at first glance their error doesn't seem like much of a problem. After all, they were still basically correct about food and the stomach being for each other. So what's the big deal here?

The problem is that the Corinthian believers didn't just think that our stomachs are going to disappear. Apparently they thought that our entire body will someday be no more. Now certainly we're going to die one day if Jesus doesn't come back first. But some of the Corinthian believers didn't believe that we will be raised from the dead. In chapter 15 and verse 12 Paul said, "Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say, 'There is no resurrection of the dead?'" So Paul returned to this issue in chapter 15 and addressed it at length. But Paul's main focus here in chapter 6 and verse 13 is on sexual immorality. Look at how he responded to the quotation from the Corinthian believers at the end of the verse: "However, the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body."

So here's the logic that the Corinthian believers seemed to be using. Our stomachs are going to be gone for good one day, and so it doesn't matter what we do with our stomachs right now. We can eat whatever we want and have as much as we want. And the same thing is true for the rest of our body, including our sexual organs. If our body as a whole is going to die and never come back to life, then we can do whatever we want with our body right now. We can have sex anytime with anyone we want. So the Corinthian believers were basically putting the appetite for food and the desire for sex on the same level. They thought that we can satisfy both of them however we please. In ancient Greek philosophy it was commonly held that the body and all other material things were evil and would be destroyed. So some people concluded that what we do with our bodies doesn't matter. And this view had apparently gained a foothold in the Corinthian church.

But Scripture teaches that God created everything, including our bodies. And everything that God made was very good, at least before sin entered the world. So there's nothing inherently evil about our bodies or any other material thing. Our bodies have eternal value because God made them, and once we're raised from the dead, we're going to have our bodies for all eternity. So what we do with our body matters profoundly. And in this passage Paul was focused specifically on the theme of sexual intimacy. Sexual immorality and especially prostitution was a big problem in the city of Corinth, and the Christians there were struggling to remain sexually pure.

So in verse 13 Paul gave his readers some pointed teaching on this subject. He said that "the body is not for sexual immorality." In other words, God didn't create our bodies so that we can enjoy sex however we want. Sexual intimacy is certainly a good gift from God, just like food is. But in each case there are some limitations on how we enjoy these gifts. We can eat any food we want as long as we're thankful to God for it. But we should not allow our stomach to become an idol. We need to guard against overeating and be-

coming gluttons. Now the situation is a little different with sexual intimacy. With food we can eat anything we want, but we can enjoy sex with only one person of the opposite gender. And first we need to make a lifelong commitment to that person in marriage. But once we're married, we can have as much sex with our spouse as we want as long as it doesn't become an idol. God should always remain first in our lives.

And that's why Paul said in verse 13 that "the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord." God did not create our bodies primarily so that we could enjoy food or sex or any other physical pleasure. Instead he made our bodies for his glory, and so our focus should be on pleasing him with our bodies. That's why Paul used the word "Lord" here. Jesus is our master, and we must submit to his authority. But he's not a cruel master who's going to exploit us or mistreat us. Instead he's a loving master who does what's best for us. That's why Paul ended verse 13 by saying that the Lord is for the body. His authority over our lives is for our benefit. He gave us our bodies so that we could enjoy a variety of physical pleasures.

But this statement is not just referring to the enjoyment of physical pleasure. I believe Paul was thinking primarily about something else when he said that the Lord is for the body. And as we keep going in this passage, we'll find out what that was. Let's move on to verse 14 and cover some new material. Look at what Paul wrote in this verse: "God raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by his power." So when Paul in verse 13 said that the Lord is for the body, he was referring to the fact that God is going to raise our bodies from the dead. James 2:26 says that "the body without the spirit is dead," and so our body and our spirit are separated when we die. Our spirits go to be with the Lord, but when Jesus returns to earth, our spirits will go with him and be reunited with our bodies.

Now in the original Greek text there's actually a conjunction that links verses 13 and 14 together. It's not translated in the Christian Standard Bible or the New International Version. But most Bible versions give us a conjunction at the beginning of verse 14. The Legacy Standard Bible, the New American Standard Bible, and the NET Bible give us the word "now." But this word seems to indicate a transition to a new thought, and so it doesn't work very well here. However, a more suitable conjunction is found in several other translations at the beginning of verse 14. The English Standard Version, the New King James Version, and the New Living Translation give us the word "and." This word just indicates that verse 14 is connected closely to verse 13. Paul was adding a sentence to explain what he meant at the end of verse 13.

But before Paul talked about our resurrection in verse 14, he said that "God raised up the Lord." The Greek word for raised is used 143 times in the New Testament, and Paul wrote 41 of them. But 20 of those occurrences are in this letter, and 19 of them are in chapter 15. As I mentioned earlier, Paul talked a great deal about the topic of resurrection in chapter 15. Now this Greek word for raised sometimes just refers to standing up. It can refer to someone who was asleep or sick. For example, Matthew 8:14 mentions that Jesus saw Peter's "mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever." Then verse 15 says that "he touched her hand, and the fever left her. Then she got up and began to serve him."

But usually this Greek word refers to being raised from the dead. That's what the word means in all 20 occurrences in this letter. Let me show you the next place where Paul used this word. In chapter 15 and

verse 1 he referred to the gospel, and then he proceeded to review it. Look at what he wrote in verses 3–5: “For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve.” So there are four parts to the good news about Jesus here. He died, he was buried, he was raised, and he appeared. His death is when he paid the penalty for our sins. Then he was buried in the ground, and on the third day God raised him from the dead. Then he appeared to many people in order to prove that he was alive. The 12 disciples were just the tip of the iceberg. If we keep reading, we’ll see that he appeared to another 500 people or so.

So the resurrection of Jesus was an established fact for the early church. It was recorded in all four Gospels, and it’s mentioned in many of the letters too, especially Paul’s letters. Romans 10:9 says, “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” In Galatians 1:1 Paul said that he was “an apostle—not from men or by men, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead.” Ephesians 1:20 says that God “exercised this power in Christ by raising him from the dead.” In 1 Thessalonians 1:10 Paul said that we wait for God’s “Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead.” In 2 Timothy 2:8 Paul said, “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead.”

Now some people have thought that the resurrection of Jesus doesn’t really matter. After all, his death is what paid for our sins, not his resurrection. So couldn’t he have stayed dead? The answer is no. Only the death of a perfect sacrifice could take away our sins, and only God is perfect. But a god who dies and can’t come back to life cannot be the true God. The resurrection of Jesus proved that he is God and has power over death. So the resurrection was essential for our salvation, and that fact is certainly confirmed in Scripture. In Romans 4:24–25 Paul said that faith is “credited to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.” So the death and resurrection of Jesus are a package deal. We cannot be justified or declared righteous unless they both happened.

But the resurrection of Jesus did not just provide salvation for us. It also ensures that we will be raised from the dead as well. That was Paul’s point in 1 Corinthians 6:14. He said that “God raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.” There are two statements here that are joined by the word “and.” The resurrection of Jesus and our resurrection are connected together. But the connection between these two statements is even stronger than it looks in the Christian Standard Bible. The Greek word for also is actually located in the middle of the first statement, and we could translate it with the word “both.” God both raised up the Lord and will raise us up by his power. The Legacy Standard Bible and the New American Standard Bible give us the right sense here when they say that “God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up by his power.”

So there’s a very strong connection here between the resurrection of Jesus and our resurrection. Now the Greek verb that Paul used to describe our resurrection is different from the one that he used for the resurrection of Jesus, and it’s only used twice in the New Testament. But these two verbs come from the same root. The second word is the same as the first one except that it has a preposition prefixed to it to

add some emphasis. So what we're seeing here is that the resurrection of Jesus is the basis for our future resurrection. And Paul circled back to this point in chapter 15 and gave some clarification. Look at what he wrote in verse 20: "But as it is, Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."

During Old Testament times the Israelites were to offer the first part of their harvest to the Lord. It pointed forward to the rest of the harvest that God would give them. And in the New Testament we see the same thing with the resurrection of Jesus. It points forward to our future resurrection and serves as a guarantee that our bodies will come alive. That's why Paul could say that Christians only fall asleep when they die. He was stressing that our physical death is only temporary. There is no doubt that we're going to be raised from the dead! But how could Paul say that Jesus was the firstfruits? After all, didn't he raise people like Lazarus from the dead? But we need to realize that these resurrections were quite distinct. Lazarus didn't live forever after Jesus raised him from the dead; he eventually died once again. But when Jesus rose from the dead, he was no longer subject to ordinary human weakness. His body was perfect and had no flaws. He was the first person to receive a new resurrection body.

Now this doesn't mean that Jesus looked completely different than he used to. It's true that Mary Magdalene didn't recognize Jesus at first when he appeared to her at the tomb. John 20:14 that she "saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know it was Jesus." However, in the next verse Jesus asked her why she was crying. Now I don't know about you, but on those rare occasions when I cry, I can't see very well. And I think that's why Mary didn't recognize Jesus at first. But once Jesus spoke her name, she recognized him right away. The two disciples on the road to Emmaus didn't recognize Jesus right away either, but Luke 24:16 says that "they were prevented from recognizing him." Then later in verse 31 we see that "their eyes were opened, and they recognized him." I think the point here is simply that God kept these men from recognizing Jesus for a short time for his own purposes.

So I think it's safe to conclude that Jesus didn't look much different after he rose from the dead. But he did have a new and improved body. And the same thing will happen to us when Jesus returns. We just looked at 1 Corinthians 15:20 a few minutes ago. Now let's read verses 21–23: "For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also comes through a man. For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ, the firstfruits; afterward, at his coming, those who belong to Christ." So our resurrection will take place when Jesus comes back to earth. And we can also see this connection in Philippians 3:20–21. I read these verses earlier, but let me read them again: "But our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly wait for a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humble condition into the likeness of his glorious body."

So when Jesus returns from heaven, he's going to transform our current body so that it's like his glorious body. Look at how Paul described our resurrection body in 1 Corinthians 15:42–44: "So it is with the resurrection of the dead: Sown in corruption, raised in incorruption; sown in dishonor, raised in glory; sown in weakness, raised in power; sown a natural body, raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body." So our new bodies will be incorruptible, which means that we won't grow old or get sick. Our new bodies will also be glorious, which probably means that our appearance will be

beautiful and attractive. There's your fountain of youth right there! We will also be more powerful than we are now, though of course we won't be as powerful as God. Finally, we're going to be spiritual, which can't mean that we will be non-physical. Instead it means that our lives will be in perfect harmony with the Holy Spirit. We will never sin again once we're raised from the dead.

Doesn't this all sound too wonderful to be true? But we can be confident that it's going to happen, because God promised it to us in his Word. And God always keeps his promises because he's all-powerful and can do anything as long as it's consistent with his character. And this is what Paul stressed as he ended his statement in 1 Corinthians 6:14. He said that God "will also raise us by his power." The Greek word for power is used 119 times in the New Testament, and Paul wrote 49 of them. He used it a total of 15 times in this letter, and we're already seen seven of them.

The first time that Paul used the Greek word for power was in chapter 1 and verse 18. He said that "the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but it is the power of God to us who are being saved." Then in chapter 2 and verse 5 he said that he didn't want our faith to "be based on human wisdom but on God's power." So God saved us spiritually by his power, and he can certainly save us physically by his power as well. I love what Jeremiah said about God's power in Jeremiah 32. In verse 17 he said, "Oh, Lord GOD! You yourself made the heavens and earth by your great power and with your outstretched arm. Nothing is too difficult for you!" If God could create the entire universe out of nothing, then there's nothing too hard for him to do.

So God can raise us from the dead and give us wonderful resurrection bodies because he's all-powerful. He raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, and he can certainly raise us from the dead as well. And so we don't need to be afraid of death or grieve excessively when our fellow Christians die. After all, death is the pathway to a glorious future. Listen to what Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–14: "We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, concerning those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve like the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, in the same way, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep."

Then Paul gave us more details about our resurrection in verses 16–18: "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the archangel's voice, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are still alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words." So I want to encourage you today to live in light of our future resurrection. Let's look forward to the return of Christ and serve him faithfully while we wait. I love how Paul ended his long chapter on the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15. In verse 58 he wrote, "Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord's work, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." Let's close in prayer and ask for God's help to remain faithful to him.