

## **VII**

***IN-DEPTH INTERPRETATIONS  
OF BIBLICAL PASSAGES  
CONCERNING  
CROSSDRESSING,  
TRANSGENDERISM  
AND TRANSSEXUALISM***

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*By the Grace of God*

## ***TRANSVESTISM, TRANSGENDERISM, AND DEUTERONOMY 22:5***

*by Elisabeth Anne Kellogg*

**A** WOMAN MUST NOT WEAR MEN'S CLOTHING, NOR A MAN WEAR WOMEN'S CLOTHING, FOR THE LORD YOUR GOD DETESTS ANYONE WHO DOES THIS. (*Deuteronomy 22:5*)

One verse that every transgendered person needs to come to terms with is *Deuteronomy 22:5*. This verse seems to be a direct condemnation of cross-dressing. But, as has been asked before, aren't they just clothes? What does this verse really mean?

In researching this, I found one commentator who used *Deuteronomy 22:5* as an opportunity to recount the anecdote of following a car containing a man dressed in women's clothes and a woman dressed in men's clothes. He used this as a springboard for an "isn't it sad the state American culture is in" sermonette. I won't embarrass the author by naming him (at least I would have been embarrassed if I had written it). This type of insightful commentary, where it is so obvious that the writer hasn't even bothered to crack the cover of the Hebrew scriptures, not only doesn't help, but it is positively harmful.

I hope that in the following, I can do better than that.

A surface reading of this text would lead the reader to the same conclusion as the commentator in the NIV Study Bible [1]: "Probably intended to prohibit such perversions as transvestism and homosexuality, especially under religious auspices. The God-created differences between men and women are not to be disregarded."

Most serious commentators on this verse, however, try to look for something more significant than taking issue with the kind of clothes people choose to wear.

The commentator in the *NIV Matthew Henry Commentary* [2] notes the following about verses 5-12 of this chapter. "Here are several laws in these verses which seem to stoop very low, and to take cognizance of things common and minute." With reference to verse 5 he says, "Probably this exchange

of garments had been used to gain opportunity of committing uncleanness, and is therefore forbidden.”

Walter R. Roehrs [3] goes on to suggest that, “Wearing apparel of the opposite sex was an ‘abomination to the Lord’ because it was the vogue among the Canaanite fertility worshippers.”

The writer in the *International Bible Commentary* [4] notes that, “Within living memory, this verse has been cited against the wearing of trousers by women; yet there has been no corresponding refusal to wear rayon/cotton or terylene/worsted mixtures (see *Deuteronomy 22:11*). The practice referred to may have been thought to have magical effects. There is certainly evidence of transvestism and simulated sexual inversion being associated in the ancient world (as well as today) with sexual license — and in a religious context.”

Among the Jewish community, the most common interpretation of this verse reflects a concern about sexual license. In ancient tradition men and women maintained separate spaces and crossdressing was viewed as a way to cross into the other space for the purpose of illicit intercourse. The *Talmudist*, Rashi (c. 1100 CE), stated, “A man’s item should not be on a woman: That she should not appear as a man so she can go out among men, for this is only for the purpose of adultery.” Likewise, “A man shall not wear a women’s garment: So he can go and be among the women.” So also the *Sefer HaHinukh*: “The root of this commandment is to keep us from sexual sin... and there is no doubt that if men and women’s clothing were the same, they would mix and the earth would be filled with impropriety.”

The *Shulhan Arukh*, a 16th century law code standard for most traditionally observant Jewish people today, states that men and women are allowed to crossdress during the festival of Purim because it is for the purpose of “gaiety,” not for adultery.

So is there more to be gotten out of this than a condemnation of crossdressing on the grounds of sexual license and sympathetic magic? John H. Walton and Victor H. Matthews [5] note, “Just as clothing served as a status marker in the ancient world, it also distinguished gender. In classical contexts, crossdressing occurred in the theater, where women were not allowed to perform, and was also an aspect of homosexual practice. Most instances in which crossdressing or transvestism are mentioned in ancient Near Eastern texts are cultic or legal in nature. For instance, when the Ugaritic hero Aqhat is murdered, his sister Paghat puts on a male garment under her female robes in order to

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assume the role of blood avenger in the absence of a male relative. An Assyrian wisdom text contains a dialogue between husband and wife who propose to exchange their clothing and thus assume each other's gender roles. This may be a fertility rite or perhaps a part of a religious drama honoring a goddess. It may be this association with other religions that made transvestism an 'abomination' in *Deuteronomy*, but the issue may also be the blurring of gender distinctions. Hittite texts use gender-related objects as well as clothing in a number of magical rites used to influence one's sexual status or diminish or alter the gender status of an adversary. The objects of the female were mirror and distaff; those of the male, various weapons."

Rabbi Eliezer ben Jacob, quoted in the *Talmud* (edited about 800 CE), says, "What is the proof that a woman may not go forth with weapons to war?" He then cites *Deuteronomy 22:5*. This understanding of "a man's items" as weapons is found in *Midrash Mishlei*. In the *Book of Judges*, Jael kills General Sisera with a tent pin instead of a sword because a sword is a man's tool and so she must find an alternate weapon. On the other hand, the Jewish *Shulhan Arukh* says that the prohibition of a man wearing "woman's dress" refers to wearing a woman's hairstyle, specifically to shave the underarms or genital region unless it is the local custom for men to do so. According to this source, they may shave arm and leg hair regardless of custom. An interesting translation of this verse is found in an early Aramaic version of the Old Testament known as the *Pseudo-Yonatan*. In it "a man's items" is translated as "*tsitsit and tefillin*," the *tallit* and *phylacteries* worn by traditional Jews. This implies that the concern of this verse is to maintain the distinction between men's and women's gender roles within ceremonial law. This is interesting as the command to wear *tsitsit* is found in *verse 12 of Deuteronomy 22*.

What about this issue of "gender role?" The first thing to note is that the two places the word "clothing" appear in the translation of this verse are really two different words in the Hebrew original. "Men's clothing" represents the Hebrew "*keli-never*" which means "all of the things of manhood", i.e. clothes, armor, weapons, tools, etc. "Women's clothing" represents the Hebrew word "*simlath*" which was the square mantel that women wore. These two terms are paired in a list in *1 Kings 10:25* where in the NIV the translation is "robes and weapons."

Therefore a better translation of this verse might be:

A WOMAN MUST NOT WEAR MEN'S GEAR, NOR A MAN WEAR WOMEN'S ROBES, FOR THE LORD YOUR GOD DETESTS ANYONE WHO DOES THIS.

This seems to imply that what we are talking about in this verse is not clothing, but the masculine and feminine roles of protector and homemaker.

It is possible that one motivation for this condemnation was to prevent men from hiding among the women to avoid their civic duty just as, in *1 Samuel 10:17-24*, Saul hid himself among the baggage.

C. F. Keil [6] directly addresses this meaning. "... the divine distinction of the sexes, which was kept sacred in civil life by the clothing peculiar to each sex, was to be not less but even more sacredly observed. 'There shall not be man's things upon a woman, and a man shall not put on a woman's clothes.' *Keli* does not signify clothing merely, nor arms only, but includes every kind of domestic and other utensils (as in *Exodus 22:6; Leviticus 11:32; 13:49*). The immediate design of this prohibition was not to prevent licentiousness, or to oppose idolatrous practices; but to maintain the sanctity of that distinction of the sexes which was established by the creation of man and woman, and in relation to which Israel was not to sin. Every violation of wiping out of this distinction — such even, for example, as the emancipation of a woman — was unnatural, and therefore an abomination in the sight of God."

Based on these interpretations, this verse no longer stands alone as a condemnation of violations in dress code. Instead it fits into a group of verses dealing with gender roles. It is not about transvestism. It's about transgenderism.

At this point there is some value in gathering the main "Male and Female" passages together in one place. Some of them are from the Old Testament and some from the New Testament.

SO GOD CREATED MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE, IN THE IMAGE OF GOD HE CREATED HIM; MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM. (*Genesis 1:27*)

DO NOT CUT THE HAIR AT THE SIDES OF YOUR HEAD OR CLIP OFF THE EDGES OF YOUR BEARD. (*Leviticus 19:27*)

A WOMAN MUST NOT WEAR MEN'S GEAR, NOR A MAN WEAR WOMEN'S ROBES, FOR THE LORD YOUR GOD DETESTS ANYONE WHO DOES THIS. (*Deuteronomy 22:5*)

EVERY MAN WHO PRAYS OR PROPHESIES WITH HIS HEAD COVERED DISHONORS HIS HEAD. AND EVERY WOMAN WHO PRAYS OR PROPHESIES WITH HER HEAD UNCOVERED DISHONORS HER HEAD — IT IS JUST AS

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THOUGH HER HEAD WERE SHAVED. IF A WOMAN DOES NOT COVER HER HEAD, SHE SHOULD HAVE HER HAIR CUT OFF; AND IF IT IS A DISGRACE FOR A WOMAN TO HAVE HER HAIR CUT OR SHAVED OFF, SHE SHOULD COVER HER HEAD. A MAN OUGHT NOT TO COVER HIS HEAD, SINCE HE IS THE IMAGE AND GLORY OF GOD; BUT THE WOMAN IS THE GLORY OF MAN. FOR MAN DID NOT COME FROM WOMAN, BUT WOMAN FROM MAN; NEITHER WAS MAN CREATED FOR WOMAN, BUT WOMAN FOR MAN. FOR THIS REASON, AND BECAUSE OF THE ANGELS, THE WOMAN OUGHT TO HAVE A SIGN OF AUTHORITY ON HER HEAD. IN THE LORD, HOWEVER, WOMAN IS NOT INDEPENDENT OF MAN, NOR IS MAN INDEPENDENT OF WOMAN. FOR AS WOMAN CAME FROM MAN, SO ALSO MAN IS BORN OF WOMAN. BUT EVERYTHING COMES FROM GOD. JUDGE FOR YOURSELVES: IS IT PROPER FOR A WOMAN TO PRAY TO GOD WITH HER HEAD UNCOVERED? DOES NOT THE VERY NATURE OF THINGS TEACH YOU THAT IF A MAN HAS LONG HAIR, IT IS A DISGRACE TO HIM, BUT THAT IF A WOMAN HAS LONG HAIR, IT IS HER GLORY? FOR LONG HAIR IS GIVEN TO HER AS A COVERING. IF ANYONE WANTS TO BE CONTENTIOUS ABOUT THIS, WE HAVE NO OTHER PRACTICE — NOR DO THE CHURCHES OF GOD. *(1 Corinthians 11:4-16)*

AS IN ALL THE CONGREGATIONS OF THE SAINTS, WOMEN SHOULD REMAIN SILENT IN THE CHURCHES. THEY ARE NOT ALLOWED TO SPEAK, BUT MUST BE IN SUBMISSION, AS THE LAW SAYS. IF THEY WANT TO INQUIRE ABOUT SOMETHING, THEY SHOULD ASK THEIR OWN HUSBANDS AT HOME; FOR IT IS DISGRACEFUL FOR A WOMAN TO SPEAK IN THE CHURCH. DID THE WORD OF GOD ORIGINATE WITH YOU? OR ARE YOU THE ONLY PEOPLE IT HAS REACHED? IF ANYONE THINKS HE IS A PROPHET OR SPIRITUALLY GIFTED, LET HIM ACKNOWLEDGE THAT WHAT I AM WRITING TO YOU IS THE LORD'S COMMAND. IF HE IGNORES THIS, HE HIMSELF WILL BE IGNORED. *(1 Corinthians 14:33b-38)*

A WOMAN SHOULD LEARN IN QUIETNESS AND FULL SUBMISSION. I DO NOT PERMIT A WOMAN TO TEACH OR TO HAVE AUTHORITY OVER A MAN; SHE MUST BE SILENT. *(1 Timothy 2:11-12)*

The commands of these passages may be summarized with the following table:

### **Men:**

- May not shave their heads. (*Leviticus 19:27*)
- May not have long hair. (*1 Corinthians 11:4-16*)
- May not trim their beards. (*Leviticus 19:27*)
- May not pray with head covered. (*1 Corinthians 11:4-16*)
- Forbidden to avoid military service. (*Deuteronomy 22:5*)
- May not enter female occupations, specifically be a homemaker. (*Deuteronomy 22:5*)

### **Women:**

- May not shave their heads. (*Leviticus 19:27*)
- May not have short hair. (*1 Corinthians 11:4-16*)
- May not pray with head uncovered. (*1 Corinthians 11:4-6*)
- Should remain silent in church. (*1 Corinthians 11:33b-38*)
- May not have authority over a man. (*1 Timothy 2:11-12*)
- Barred from military service. (*Deuteronomy 22:5*)
- May not bear arms. (*Deuteronomy 22:5*)
- May not enter male occupations. (*Deuteronomy 22:5*)

It should be noted concerning a man's hair that the rule of the Nazarite violated two of these commands. He was to grow his hair long (*Numbers 6:5*) and afterwards was to shave his head (*Numbers 6:18*). Also the tonsure of medieval monks would have violated *Leviticus 19:27*.

Today few, if any, of these rules are enforced by even the most conservative churches. The twentieth century saw the abandonment of head coverings by the Catholic Church. Among all but the very conservative, female pastors and priests are allowed. This last is an area worthy of discussion at another time.

Lawrence O. Richards [7] writes, "In most cases the OT civil laws governing the rights of men and women reflect cultural patterns. They fall short of what many believe to be a deserved "equality." But it is important to remember that no culture provides equality. Injustices exist in every culture. And OT law was not a perfect expression of God's ideal for the whole human race (*Matthew 5:21-43*). OT law was an accommodation, bringing righteousness as close as possible to men and women who lived in a world in

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which all things were tainted and twisted by sin.”

Many of the rules that Paul imposes on men and women above are reflections of practices in the Jewish Synagogue. For example, “The woman does not read out of the *Torah*, for the sake of the honor of the congregation.” In contrast to this, it was also Paul who wrote,

YOU ARE ALL SONS OF GOD THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS, FOR ALL OF YOU WHO WERE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST HAVE CLOTHED YOURSELVES WITH CHRIST. THERE IS NEITHER JEW NOR GREEK, SLAVE NOR FREE, MALE NOR FEMALE, FOR YOU ARE ALL ONE IN CHRIST JESUS. IF YOU BELONG TO CHRIST, THEN YOU ARE ABRAHAM’S SEED, AND HEIRS ACCORDING TO THE PROMISE. (*Galatians 3:26-29*)

Richards continues [8], “With the gospel came the announcement that in Christ ‘there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus’ (*Galatians 3:28*). This proclamation insists that there is spiritual equality in God’s sight, despite those cultural distinctions made in every society. Yet believers remain male and female, slave and free. And each must live out his or her life within roles imposed by society as well as within the believing community.

“For the church, the teaching of the gospel is a challenge to become the kind of community that Scripture says we are — one that values persons apart from their social role. For the woman today, the teaching of the gospel is a challenge to be comfortable with herself as a female. A woman, because she is significant in Christ, can find worth and dignity by living life as a woman — without a need to act like a man.”

I would expect Richards would be willing to expand this section to include, “For the man today, the teaching of the gospel is a challenge to be comfortable with himself as a male. A man, because he is significant in Christ, can find worth and dignity by living life as a man — without a need to act like a woman.” And this is where the real issue for the transgendered begins.

How can the transgendered, whether male or female, be comfortable with himself/herself within his/her gender? To address this issue it is necessary to understand who and what a transgendered person is.

The transgendered person is usually not homosexual. The stereotype of the gay drag-queen is exactly that, a stereotype. Although a few cross-dressing homosexuals exist, they are rare compared to the number of heterosexual

transgendered people. If transgendered people spend a lot of time at gay bars, it's because they find more acceptance there than they do in the "straight" world.

The transgendered person is not sick. Mental health professionals state publicly that transvestism is not a mental illness.

It might be a fair statement, though, to say that any kind of transvestism represents some relationship defect in a person's life and so is a reflection of sin. People who cross gender lines in dressing can be classed into four categories.

**1. The fetishist transvestite** receives sexual stimulation from women's clothing and this stimulation is the reason for cross-dressing. For the fetishist transvestite there is the brokenness in relationships that comes from valuing things (articles of clothing) more than people.

**2. The transsexual** suffers from gender dysphoria, a condition where it is difficult or impossible for the individual to operate in the traditional roles of his gender. In extreme cases, the sufferer of gender dysphoria may receive hormone treatments and surgery in an attempt to conform the body to the desired gender. For the transsexual, cross-dressing does not produce sexual stimulation. Instead it is used as a way to feel like they fit in to the desired gender. Belonging is the most important motivator, and being forced to return to the birth-gender role can be emotionally traumatic for them. This shows a deep-seated brokenness with self, and often there are problems of low self esteem. Sometimes this brokenness can be healed in the gender of birth; sometimes it can only be healed by transitioning to the gender of choice. Here the challenge is to find healing in a way that does not destroy the sufferer's relationships with those around him, especially family and friends. Often the result of this struggle is divorce, with its accompanying problems. This happens even though most transsexual people highly value these relationships and mourn their passing. Another deep-seated problem is with the transition process itself. Many transsexuals have trouble following the Benjamin Standards of Care. There are many cases of abuse of illegal hormones, overdosing on prescription hormones and going off-shore for surgery.

**3. The dual role transvestite**, also known as androgynous, is like the transsexual except that the gender dysphoria is not strong enough to be debilitating. This type of transvestite feels relatively comfortable functioning in both male and female roles. Here all that has been said about the transsexual's brokenness applies with the addition that the dual role transvestite is more

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likely to reach a compromise to preserve existing relationships while still allowing some expression of the “other-genderedness.” In some cases the compromise is to make a feminine gesture of sacrificing happiness for the sake of others.

4. Certain members of the **fashion counter-culture** also dress in transgender clothes with no attempt to fit into the opposite gender role. Generally they try to make a fashion statement by wearing skirts. Properly this group does not belong to the transgender community. Here a brokenness exists with society where an attempt is made to be non-conformist.

So how can the transgendered, whether male or female, be comfortable with himself/herself within his/her gender? There is sin in the life of every transgendered person, just as there is sin in the life of every “normal” person. And the solution is faith in Jesus Christ, just as it is for every “normal” person.

BUT NOW A RIGHTEOUSNESS FROM GOD, APART FROM LAW, HAS BEEN MADE KNOWN, TO WHICH THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS TESTIFY. THIS RIGHTEOUSNESS FROM GOD COMES THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST TO ALL WHO BELIEVE. THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE, FOR ALL HAVE SINNED AND FALL SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD, AND ARE JUSTIFIED FREELY BY HIS GRACE THROUGH THE REDEMPTION THAT CAME BY CHRIST JESUS. GOD PRESENTED HIM AS A SACRIFICE OF ATONEMENT, THROUGH FAITH IN HIS BLOOD. HE DID THIS TO DEMONSTRATE HIS JUSTICE, BECAUSE IN HIS FORBEARANCE HE HAD LEFT THE SINS COMMITTED BEFOREHAND UNPUNISHED — HE DID IT TO DEMONSTRATE HIS JUSTICE AT THE PRESENT TIME, SO AS TO BE JUST AND THE ONE WHO JUSTIFIES THOSE WHO HAVE FAITH IN JESUS. (*Romans 3:21-26*)

Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

FOR IT IS BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED, THROUGH FAITH — AND THIS NOT FROM YOURSELVES, IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD — NOT BY WORKS, SO THAT NO ONE CAN BOAST. (*Ephesians 2:8-9*)

First justification comes through faith. When the relationship with God has

been repaired (justification) in Christ, then the Holy Spirit begins to work healing (sanctification) in the life of the transgendered person. The power for this comes through the Word, in the community of the church. It is to the church that the transgendered need to turn for help in healing the relationships that sin has broken in their lives, relationships with others and with self.

There is some value in comparing the transgender issues of today to the women's movement of the twentieth century. The women's movement was militant and political. This is in many ways the opposite of transgenderism. The transgendered usually want nothing better than to conform and blend in. The desire is to just be "one of the girls." And with advances in hormone therapy and sexual reorientation surgery, this is becoming more practicable. Where this is not possible, there is a tendency for the transgendered person to "stay in the closet."

This means that the approach the church needs to take is different than dealing with women's issues. Where many churches develop women's programs toward empowerment, transgender programs need to provide safe places to draw out the feelings, the hopes and fears, of participants. There needs to be a support system for wives and others in close relationship with the transgendered. There needs to be a support system to help the transitioning deal with Standards of Care issues. And there needs to be opportunities given for the constructive expression of cross-gender feelings that make each one feel valued in both the gender of birth and the gender of choice. What the church needs to bring is compassion, not condemnation.

The real question is whether the church will be willing to aid in that healing. If the church withholds the word of the gospel until the transgendered have fixed the sin in their lives, that healing will never happen. Happily, it is the Holy Spirit that provides the real healing through the words, "Christ died for you."

#### Notes:

- [1] NIV Study Bible, (Grand Rapids, The Zondervan Corporation, 1985), p. 270
- [2] Church, Leslie F. and Peterman, Gerald W., editors, *The NIV Matthew Henry Commentary In One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, The Zondervan Corporation, 1992), p. 201
- [3] Roehrs, Walter R. and Franzmann, Martin H., *Concordia Self-Study Commentary*, (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1979), p. 134
- [4] Bruce, F. F., editor, *The International Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), p. 273
- [5] Walter, John H. and Matthews, Victor H., *The IVP Bible Background Commentary Genesis-Deuteronomy*, (Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 1997), p. 251

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[6] Keil, C. F. and Delitzsch, F., *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes, vol. I - The Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981), pp. 409f

[7] Richards, Lawrence O., *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House, 1985), p. 428

[8] *ibid*, p. 430

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## ***TRANSSEXUALISM FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE BIBLICAL EUNUCH AND THE BARREN WOMAN***

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**T**wo passages from the Bible are used, not against the transgendered in general, but against the transsexual in particular: *Leviticus 21:17-21* and *Deuteronomy 23:1*. These two scripture passages talk about damaged genitals. Transsexuals are those transgendered people who desire to be women so much that they alter the appearance of their bodies through hormones and surgery. The opponents of transsexuality often summarize it this way: “If there is nothing wrong with your male body, isn’t it a sin to mutilate it by going through HRT (hormone readjustment therapy) and SRS (sexual reassignment surgery)?” In this article I will give the New Testament Biblical answer to this question. And that answer is very explicit.

In the Old Testament, God told the Israelites that worship of Him had to be perfect. This included the requirement that the priests also be physically perfect:

SAY TO AARON: FOR THE GENERATIONS TO COME NONE OF YOUR DESCENDANTS WHO HAS A DEFECT MAY COME NEAR TO OFFER THE FOOD OF HIS GOD. NO MAN WHO HAS ANY DEFECT MAY COME NEAR; NO MAN WHO IS BLIND OR LAME, DISFIGURED OR DEFORMED; NO MAN WITH A CRIPPLED FOOT OR HAND, OR WHO IS HUNCHBACKED OR DWARFED, OR WHO HAS ANY EYE DEFECT, OR WHO HAS FESTERING OR RUNNING SORES OR DAMAGED TESTICLES. NO DESCENDANT OF AARON THE PRIEST WHO HAS ANY DEFECT IS TO COME NEAR TO PRESENT THE OFFERINGS MADE TO THE LORD BY FIRE. HE HAS A DEFECT; HE MUST NOT COME NEAR TO OFFER THE FOOD OF HIS GOD. (*Leviticus 21:17-21*)

The requirement for perfect sex organs extended also to the animals sacrificed:

YOU MUST NOT OFFER TO THE LORD AN ANIMAL WHOSE TESTICLES ARE BRUISED, CRUSHED, TORN OR CUT. (*Leviticus 22:24*)

In *Deuteronomy* this is extended, not just to the priests, but to all worshipers:

NO ONE WHO HAS BEEN EMASCULATED BY CRUSHING OR CUTTING MAY ENTER THE ASSEMBLY OF THE LORD. (*Deuteronomy 23:1*)

Now, this is exactly what we are talking about with SRS, isn’t it? In the

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most common type of SRS, penile inversion, the penis is reformed and turned inside out to form the neo-vagina. The scrotum is slit down the middle, the testicles are removed and the scrotum is formed into the new labia. Emasculated by cutting, indeed! The term used for emasculated men in the Bible is “eunuch.”

By Old Testament law, eunuchs were excluded from any possibility of becoming Jewish. As such the post-operative transsexual would be forever excluded from the worship of God. But these are ceremonial laws and it is important to remember that we as Christians are not bound by the Old Testament ceremonial law. And in fact the New Testament addresses this very issue.

Hear how Jesus speaks of eunuchs in non-condemning language in the *Gospel of Matthew*:

“I TELL YOU THAT ANYONE WHO DIVORCES HIS WIFE, EXCEPT FOR MARITAL UNFAITHFULNESS, AND MARRIES ANOTHER WOMAN COMMITS ADULTERY.”

THE DISCIPLES SAID TO HIM, “IF THIS IS THE SITUATION BETWEEN A HUSBAND AND WIFE, IT IS BETTER NOT TO MARRY.”

JESUS REPLIED, “NOT EVERYONE CAN ACCEPT THIS WORD, BUT ONLY THOSE TO WHOM IT HAS BEEN GIVEN. FOR SOME ARE EUNUCHS BECAUSE THEY WERE BORN THAT WAY; OTHERS WERE MADE THAT WAY BY MEN; AND OTHERS HAVE RENOUNCED MARRIAGE [*NIV footnote (a)*: “OR HAVE MADE THEMSELVES EUNUCHS”] BECAUSE OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. THE ONE WHO CAN ACCEPT THIS SHOULD ACCEPT IT.”  
(*Matthew 19:12*)

More important than this passage is the incident of the Ethiopian eunuch and the apostle Philip:

NOW AN ANGEL OF THE LORD SAID TO PHILIP, “GO SOUTH TO THE ROAD — THE DESERT ROAD — THAT GOES DOWN FROM JERUSALEM TO GAZA.” SO HE STARTED OUT, AND ON HIS WAY HE MET AN ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH, AN IMPORTANT OFFICIAL IN CHARGE OF ALL THE TREASURY OF CANDACE, QUEEN OF THE ETHIOPIANS. THIS MAN HAD GONE TO JERUSALEM TO WORSHIP, AND ON HIS WAY HOME WAS SITTING IN HIS CHARIOT READING THE BOOK OF *ISAIAH* THE PROPHET. THE SPIRIT TOLD PHILIP, “GO TO THAT CHARIOT AND STAY NEAR IT.”

THEN PHILIP RAN UP TO THE CHARIOT AND HEARD THE MAN READING

ISAIAH THE PROPHET. “DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU ARE READING?” PHILIP ASKED.

“HOW CAN I,” HE SAID, “UNLESS SOMEONE EXPLAINS IT TO ME?” SO HE INVITED PHILIP TO COME UP AND SIT WITH HIM.

THE EUNUCH WAS READING THIS PASSAGE OF SCRIPTURE:

“HE WAS LED LIKE A SHEEP TO THE SLAUGHTER, AND AS A LAMB BEFORE THE SHEARER IS SILENT, SO HE DID NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH. IN HIS HUMILIATION HE WAS DEPRIVED OF JUSTICE. WHO CAN SPEAK OF HIS DESCENDANTS? FOR HIS LIFE WAS TAKEN FROM THE EARTH.”

THE EUNUCH ASKED PHILIP, “TELL ME, PLEASE, WHO IS THE PROPHET TALKING ABOUT, HIMSELF OR SOMEONE ELSE?” THEN PHILIP BEGAN WITH THAT VERY PASSAGE OF SCRIPTURE AND TOLD HIM THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT JESUS.

AS THEY TRAVELED ALONG THE ROAD, THEY CAME TO SOME WATER AND THE EUNUCH SAID, “LOOK, HERE IS SOME WATER. WHY SHOULDN’T I BE BAPTIZED?” AND HE GAVE ORDERS TO STOP THE CHARIOT. THEN BOTH PHILIP AND THE EUNUCH WENT DOWN INTO THE WATER AND PHILIP BAPTIZED HIM. WHEN THEY CAME UP OUT OF THE WATER, THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD SUDDENLY TOOK PHILIP AWAY, AND THE EUNUCH DID NOT SEE HIM AGAIN, BUT WENT ON HIS WAY REJOICING. (*Acts 8:26-39*)

The question of the Ethiopian Eunuch, “Why shouldn’t I be baptized?” has more significance than appears on the surface. The commandments of the “righteous proselyte” (*ger tzedek*) specified three steps to the process of becoming a Jew: first, the study of Judaism culminating in the acceptance of “the yoke of the commandments;” second, circumcision if the convert is male; and third, the immersion in a kosher *mikvah* (baptism). The absence of any of these things renders the conversion invalid. In the case of a eunuch, not only is circumcision not possible but rabbinic authorities declared that the prospective convert is also barred from “the immersion of proselytes.”

The Ethiopian Eunuch had just heard from the apostle Philip that God in Jesus Christ had forgiven his sins and made him acceptable to God. If this was so, then the eunuch was justified in asking “Doesn’t this open to me the door into God’s Kingdom that has so far been closed to me? Why shouldn’t I be given the immersion of proselytes?” Philip’s response is to perform the ceremony.

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So it can be seen that under the New Testament the eunuch has as much a place in the kingdom of God as the one whose sex organs are perfect. Jesus has provided a new way of salvation.

FOR IT IS BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED, THROUGH FAITH — AND THIS NOT FROM YOURSELVES, IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD — NOT BY WORKS, SO THAT NO ONE CAN BOAST. (*Ephesians 2:8-9*)

Yet even in the Old Testament we hear echoes of these things. The prophet Isaiah speaks words of encouragement to eunuchs:

LET NO FOREIGNER WHO HAS BOUND HIMSELF TO THE LORD SAY, “THE LORD WILL SURELY EXCLUDE ME FROM HIS PEOPLE.” AND LET NOT ANY EUNUCH COMPLAIN, “I AM ONLY A DRY TREE.” FOR THIS IS WHAT THE LORD SAYS: “TO THE EUNUCHS WHO KEEP MY SABBATHS, WHO CHOOSE WHAT PLEASES ME AND HOLD FAST TO MY COVENANT - TO THEM I WILL GIVE WITHIN MY TEMPLE AND ITS WALLS A MEMORIAL AND A NAME BETTER THAN SONS AND DAUGHTERS; I WILL GIVE THEM AN EVERLASTING NAME THAT WILL NOT BE CUT OFF.” (*Isaiah 56:3-5*)

Also, Daniel the prophet was a eunuch, for he was taken to Babylon to be an officer in the court of King Nebuchadnezzar. And such officials were made eunuchs. See *Isaiah 39:5-7* and *Daniel 1:3-6*.

It is easy to see how these passages about eunuchs are directly applicable to SRS and the transsexual. The transsexual ought to have no doubts that she/he is loved and accepted by God, to have a place within His temple, to have a memorial and an everlasting name. Even more, this is good news for anyone who believes that he/she is somehow unacceptable to God. But God is bigger than your puny sin. His grace is bigger than anything you have done, than anything that you are. His grace truly is sufficient for you.

The warm and accepting tone of these passages has caused the homosexual community to try and appropriate them by saying that homosexuals are eunuchs because they do not have children. It is not within the scope of this article to discuss this interpretation, but homosexuals can be comforted with the good news that this passage has for all people: that God accepts the unacceptable by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Is there any more that can be said in this area? Yes, for the post-operative transsexual is not just a male eunuch. She has passed over to the female side, but with one important exception. She will never be able to give birth

to any children, a burden for any woman whether genetic or neo. Even after SRS, when you have ceased to be a man and have become a barren woman, the Lord still has words of encouragement for you.

The prophet Isaiah said:

“SING, O BARREN WOMAN, YOU WHO NEVER BORE A CHILD; BURST INTO SONG, SHOUT FOR JOY, YOU WHO WERE NEVER IN LABOR; BECAUSE MORE ARE THE CHILDREN OF THE DESOLATE WOMAN THAN OF HER WHO HAS A HUSBAND,” SAYS THE LORD. “ENLARGE THE PLACE OF YOUR TENT, STRETCH YOUR TENT CURTAINS WIDE, DO NOT HOLD BACK; LENGTHEN YOUR CORDS, STRENGTHEN YOUR STAKES. FOR YOU WILL SPREAD OUT TO THE RIGHT AND TO THE LEFT; YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL DISPOSSESS NATIONS AND SETTLE IN THEIR DESOLATE CITIES.” (*Isaiah 54:1-3*)

Will God truly give children to the neo-woman? Perhaps not children of her body. Paul explains in *Galatians 4:24-31* that this verse is speaking about spiritual children. This spiritual multiplying is far more rewarding in the long term (eternally) than physical birth (not to deny the tremendous value of having physical children), and is the truest sense of the “go forth and multiply” of *Genesis 1:28*.

At one of the Christmas services at our church a couple of years ago, our pastor mentioned something that struck a chord with me. Maybe it will with you, too. He was talking about the verse in *O Little Town of Bethlehem* that goes, “*O Holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us we pray. Cast out our sin and enter in. Be born in us today.*” He said that when Christ is in our heart, it doesn’t matter whether we are barren or not, we have already gone through labor and given birth. In *Romans 8:18-25* Paul talks about our previous sinful lives as labor pains that came before Christ was born into our lives. And as we take God’s love to others, they become born again and, in a sense, they are our children.

Hear what the psalmist wrote:

WHO IS LIKE THE LORD OUR GOD, THE ONE WHO SITS ENTHRONED ON HIGH, WHO STOOPS DOWN TO LOOK ON THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH? HE RAISES THE POOR FROM THE DUST AND LIFTS THE NEEDY FROM THE ASH HEAP; HE SEATS THEM WITH PRINCES, WITH THE PRINCES OF THEIR PEOPLE. HE SETTLES THE BARREN WOMAN IN HER HOME AS A HAPPY MOTHER OF CHILDREN. PRAISE THE LORD. (*Psalms 113:9*)

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Our God is the God who makes the first to be last and the last to be first. And He uses foolishness to show His wisdom and the weak things of the world to show His strength. Perhaps it is because you are despised by the world that you can have many children in His name.

So if you are transsexual, the one thing to think about as you go forward with HRT and SRS is that God has loved you so much that He sent His son Jesus to die for your sins and that nothing, nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

May the blessing of the Lord Jesus go with you.

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## **TRANSGENDERISM AND 1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-10**

by Elisabeth Anne Kellogg

**O**ne of the verses used to condemn transgenderism is *1 Corinthians 6:9-10*. In this article, we will do a thorough exegesis of the passage to determine its meaning and find how, if at all, it relates to transgenderism.

This verse is cited as saying that the effeminate will not inherit the kingdom of God. This idea is based on the King James Version's translation of the Greek *malakoi* (μαλακοι).

KNOW YE NOT THAT THE UNRIGHTEOUS SHALL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD? BE NOT DECEIVED: NEITHER FORNICATORS, NOR IDOLATERS, NOR ADULTERERS, NOR EFFEMINATE, NOR ABUSERS OF THEMSELVES WITH MANKIND, NOR THIEVES, NOR COVETOUS, NOR DRUNKARDS, NOR REVILERS, NOR EXTORTIONERS, SHALL INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD. (*1 Corinthians 6:9-10, KJV*)

A comparison of the King James and New International translations, however, shows that this translation is not universal.

DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT THE WICKED WILL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD? DO NOT BE DECEIVED: NEITHER THE SEXUALLY IMMORAL NOR IDOLATERS NOR ADULTERERS NOR MALE PROSTITUTES NOR HOMOSEXUAL OFFENDERS NOR THIEVES NOR THE GREEDY NOR DRUNKARDS NOR SLANDERERS NOR SWINDLERS WILL INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD. (*1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-10, NIV*)

“Male prostitutes” is a lot different from “effeminate.” So what is the correct translation?

Approaching this verse, I at first thought it would simply be a matter of determining the correct meaning of this one word. In retrospect, it has turned out to be more like the process of peeling an onion. This has been compounded by the fact that most commentators and translators seem to have considered this verse either too obvious (perhaps read “inconsequential”) or too linguistically difficult to have put much effort into explaining and translating it.

Let us then begin to peel this onion by looking at the meaning of *malakos*

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(μαλακος). The following can be extracted from Liddell and Scott [Liddell, Henry George, and Scott, Robert, revised by Jones, Henry Stuart, *A Greek-English Lexicon With a Supplement*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1968), pp.1076f]:

*Malakos* has the basic meaning of soft.

1.of things subject to touch: soft. A fresh plowed field is a “soft” field; soft, grassy meadow; soft-fleeced; a slow fire is a “soft” fire; marsh water is “soft” water; to sleep “softly” means on soft bedding; to sit “softly” means on a cushion. 2.of things not subject to touch: gentle; soft, mild. “Soft” words are fair words; “soft” looks are tender, youthful looks; a “soft” scent is faint, or delicate; a “soft” climate is mild. 3.of persons or modes of life: soft; mild; gentle; and negatively: feeble; faint-hearted; cowardly; morally weak; lacking in self control;. “Soft” music is effeminate or tuned to a low pitch. “soft” writing style is feeble. “soft” reason is weak; loose; bodily speaking, “soft” is weakly; sick; to be ill.

There is nothing here to suggest that the meaning is “effeminate,” except in the musical sense. And certainly nothing to suggest prostitution.

Looking at other scriptural references is not particularly helpful either. Outside of this verse, the word only appears twice in the *Septuagint* and twice in the Gospels. In *Proverbs 25:15* we hear about the power of a “soft” tongue (fair speech). And in *Proverbs 26:22*, gossip is compared to “soft” food (choice morsels). In *Matthew 11:8* and *Luke 7:25*, John the Baptist asks the crowd if they have come to see a man in “soft” clothing (fine clothes).

The early church fathers generally believed that in this verse Paul was talking about those who were morally weak. It was only in the late middle ages that interpreters started to claim that here “soft” meant some kind of sexual sin.

One argument put forth about translating this word has to do with the meaning of “effeminate” at the time the KJV was written. In the 16th through the 18th Centuries the term “effeminate” did not mean what it means to us today. At that time the term was applied to a class of men who were notorious womanizers. These men pursued women as a career, often living off the older rich women whom they seduced. The most famous of these was Casanova. The modern word would likely be “gigolo.”

So far we have made little progress by working with the single word. It is appropriate to move to the next layer by examining the immediate verse.

The original text in Greek is:

μη πλανασθε ουτε πορνοι ουτε ειδωλολατραι ουτε μοιχοι  
ουτε μαλακος ουτε αρσενοκοιται ουτε κλεπται ουτε  
πλεονεκται ου μεθυστοι ου λοιδοροι ουχ αρπαγες  
βασιλειαν θεου κληρονομησουσιν.  
(1 Corinthians 6:9b-10)

This passage lists ten groups of people who “will not inherit the kingdom of God.” The Greek for some of these groups is well known; some other terms are difficult. All of the terms in this list are masculine plural. A point to remember about gender and number in Greek is that the feminine plural is only used for groups that are exclusively feminine. Mixed masculine and feminine groups are always referred to with the masculine plural.

*Pornos* (πορνος), *porne* (πορνη) - A prostitute. The Greek root comes from the verb “to sell.” In the New Testament, this term appears to have two closely related meanings. One is as the equivalent of the Hebrew *zanah*, as in “Tamar has been playing the harlot.” (*Genesis 38:24*) It was with the sense of harlotry that the Pharisees protested that they were not illegitimate children in *John 8:41*. In *1 Timothy 1:10* it is translated “adulterer” in the Hebrew sense when normally *moichos* is the proper term for an adulterer. Since *moichos* also appears in our list here, “adulterer” is not the likely meaning. The other meaning of *pornos* is in the proper sense of a prostitute or the patron of a prostitute. Because in the New Testament, the prohibition of prostitution is paired so often with the prohibition of eating meat sacrificed to idols, it is specifically referring to temple prostitution. The NIV translation of this word as the generalized “sexually immoral” seems untenable here and in every other verse where it occurs.

*Eidololatries* (ειδωλολατρης) - An idolater, a person or thing offered or dedicated to an idol.

*Moichos* (μοιχος) - An adulterer or paramour.

*Malakos* (μαλακος) - Soft.

*Arsenokoites* (αρσενοκοιτης) - A slang term, this word only appears three times in Greek literature (here, in a commentary on this verse, and in *1 Timothy 1:10*). It probably meant a homosexual or a pederast. The majority of homosexuals in the Roman world were pederasts so it is difficult to deter-

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mine whether it refers to the homosexuality part, the pederast part or both. In *1 Timothy 1:10* it is translated as “perverts,” a rather ambiguous word.

*Klepton* (κλεπτον) - A thief.

*Pleonectes* (πλεονεκτης) - A defrauder, greedy (in the active sense of taking what you don't deserve).

*Methusos* (μεθυσος) - A drunkard.

*Loidoros* (λοιδορος) - A reviler. A verbal abuser.

*Harpax* (αρπαξ) - A robber or rapist. The “extortioners” of the KJV is probably better than the “swindlers” of the NIV, for extortioners tend to use force to take what they want, rather than the indirect methods of swindlers.

This list is related to that in *1 Corinthians 5:9-11*. There the NIV lists “the sexually immoral (πορνοις), prostitutes, greedy, idolaters, slanderers, drunkards, and swindlers.”

The lists in *1 Corinthians 5:9-11* and *6:9-10* are bracketed by two discussions of “sexual immorality.” One, in *1 Corinthians 5:1*, discusses an instance of incest: “A man has his father's wife.” The other, in *1 Corinthians 6:15-20*, discusses joining the members of Christ's body to a prostitute. While the NIV translates both these passages as referring to “sexual immorality,” the Greek refers to (πορνοις) prostitutes. This is in obvious reference to the fact that at Corinth the worship of Aphrodite fostered prostitution in the name of religion. At one time 1,000 sacred prostitutes served her temple. This is a large number for a city of about 650,000 people. Approximately one out of every hundred women was a prostitute.

In this context, it is a little difficult to figure out what kind of “soft” people are being talked about. Many translators seem to assume the first half of the list deals with sexual sin and the second half with other kinds of sins.

At this point it helps to enlarge the context. *1 Corinthians 5:7-8* provide an introduction to verses *9 and 10*, where the word *adikoi* (αδικοι) gives the pivot to connect them.

THE VERY FACT THAT YOU HAVE LAWSUITS AMONG YOU MEANS YOU HAVE BEEN COMPLETELY DEFEATED ALREADY. WHY NOT RATHER BE WRONGED (ΑΔΙΚΕΙΣΘΕ ΑΔΙΚΕΙΣΘΕ)? WHY NOT RATHER BE CHEATED?

INSTEAD, YOU YOURSELVES CHEAT AND DO WRONG (ADIKEITE  
ἀδικεῖτε), AND YOU DO THIS TO YOUR BROTHERS. DO YOU NOT KNOW  
THAT THE WICKED (ADIKOI ἀδικοί) WILL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF  
GOD? (*1 Corinthians 6:7-9a, NIV*)

Now we can see that this is not a random list of ten kinds of sinners, but ten groups of people who might be sued for wronging someone. How then, might we translate these groups as the victimizers of others?

The first two groups are people who purport to buy or sell something that they cannot. Prostitutes are sellers of “love.” But the one kind of love they can’t sell is “true love.” In essence they take money for something they can’t give. The relationship between the prostitute and his/her client is mutually harmful. Idolaters or those involved in idol worship, try to buy and sell favor with the gods through gifts and sacrifices. Much of religion today is still idolatry in this sense. The sellers of heaven preach a religion of obeying the law instead of telling people of the grace that God has provided through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The next three groups are those who gain sex by force or persuasion. Adulterers are those who have illicit sex with married people. Pederasts are child molesters. Between these two, “soft” may mean the seducers of unmarried people. Here is recognition of the truism: “Seduction is the subtlest form of rape.” In this context, the interpretation of “soft” as being the Casanovas and Don Juans of the world, makes sense.

The next two groups steal, either directly or by persuasion: thieves and defrauders or swindlers.

The last three groups show violence to others. Drunkards are those who become violent from alcohol. Revilers are verbal abusers. Slanderers use words to harm people’s reputations. In either case, they do it out of hate. Spouse abusers, child abusers, and any who commit hate crimes would also be condemned here. Robbers and rapists use violence for gain.

So a possible translation of this passage might be:

THE VERY FACT THAT YOU HAVE LAWSUITS AMONG YOU MEANS YOU  
HAVE BEEN COMPLETELY DEFEATED ALREADY. WHY NOT RATHER BE  
WRONGED? WHY NOT RATHER BE CHEATED? INSTEAD, YOU  
YOURSELVES CHEAT AND WRONG, AND YOU DO THIS TO YOUR  
BROTHERS! DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT WRONG-DOERS WILL NOT INHERIT

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THE KINGDOM OF GOD? DO NOT BE DECEIVED: NEITHER THE SELLERS OF “LOVE,” NOR THE SELLERS OF HEAVEN, NOT THE SEDUCERS OF THE MARRIED, OF THE UNMARRIED, OR OF CHILDREN, NEITHER THIEVES NOR SWINDLERS, NOR THOSE VIOLENT FROM DRINK, FROM HATE, OR FOR GAIN WILL INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD. (*1 Corinthians 6:7-10*)

This interpretation places this passage within the main theme of *1 Corinthians 1:10-6:20* where Paul is arguing against the divisions that have grown up in the Corinthian church.

I APPEAL TO YOU, BROTHERS, IN THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THAT ALL OF YOU AGREE WITH ONE ANOTHER SO THAT THERE MAY BE NO DIVISIONS AMONG YOU AND THAT YOU MAY BE PERFECTLY UNITED IN MIND AND THOUGHT. (*1 Corinthians 1:10*)

FOR SINCE THERE IS JEALOUSY AND QUARRELING AMONG YOU, ARE YOU NOT WORLDLY? (*1 Corinthians 3:3*)

THE SPIRITUAL MAN MAKES JUDGEMENTS ABOUT ALL THINGS, BUT HE HIMSELF IS NOT SUBJECT TO ANY MAN’S JUDGEMENT. (*1 Corinthians 2:15*)

IF ANY OF YOU HAS A DISPUTE WITH ANOTHER, DARE HE TAKE IT BEFORE THE UNGODLY FOR JUDGEMENT INSTEAD OF BEFORE THE SAINTS? (*1 Corinthians 6:1*)

THE VERY FACT THAT YOU HAVE LAWSUITS AMONG YOU MEANS YOU HAVE BEEN COMPLETELY DEFEATED ALREADY. (*1 Corinthians 6:7*)

An echo of this is in *2 Corinthians 12:20*,

I FEAR THAT THERE MAY BE QUARRELING, JEALOUSY, OUTBURSTS OF ANGER, FACTIONS, SLANDER, GOSSIP, ARROGANCE AND DISORDER.

Based on modern exegesis, this verse has nothing to do with transgenderism at all.

It’s about the dangers of divisiveness in the church.

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