



1 Corinthians 6:9-11 & 1 Timothy 9-10 —Arsenokoites and Malokoi



1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 1 Timothy 1:9-10—Arsenokoites and Malokoi

¹ Cor 6:9 Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, (Greek (μαλακοί malakoi), or practice homosexuality (Greek: ἀρσενικοῖται arsenokoites)¹⁰ or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people—none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God. ¹¹ Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.



1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 1 Timothy 1:9-10—Arsenokoites and Malokoi

1 Tim 1:8 We know that the law is good when used correctly. 9 For the law was not intended for people who do what is right. It is for people who are lawless and rebellious, who are ungodly and sinful, who consider nothing sacred and defile what is holy, who kill their father or mother or commit other murders. 10 The law is for people who are sexually immoral (*Greek: ἀρσενικοῖται arsenokoites*), or who practice homosexuality (*Greek (μαλακοί malakoi)*), or are slave traders, liars, promise breakers, or who do anything else that contradicts the wholesome teaching 11 that comes from the glorious Good News entrusted to me by our blessed God.



1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 1 Timothy 1:9-10—Arsenokoites and Malokoi

Αρσενοκοίτης- Arsenonkoites—A rare Greek compound word appearing only twice in the New Testament and only rarely in later early Christian writings.

- **Arseno—Male**
- **Koites—Bed (sexual in nature)**
- **Literally- “malebedders”**



1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 1 Timothy 1:9-10—Arenokoites and Malokoi

Since this is an obscure word invented by Paul let's look and see how it's been translated in various translations:

Version	Year Translated	Translation ARSENOKOITES	Translation Emphasis
Vugate	405	<i>masculorum concubitores</i> ("men who lie with males")	Behavior
Luther	1545	<i>Knabenschändern</i> ("boy abusers/boy traffickers")	Behavior
Geneva	1560	buggerers	Behavior
KJV	1611	abusers of themselves with mankind	Behavior
Youngs	1862	sodomites	Behavior
Revised ^(UK)	1885	abusers of themselves with men	Behavior
ASV	1901	abusers of themselves with men	Behavior
RSV	1946	homosexuals	Identity
NASB	1971	homosexuals	Identity
NIV	1978	Homosexual offenders	Identity
NKJV	1982	Sodomites	Identity
NLT	2004	those who practice homosexuality	Identity



1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 1 Timothy 1:9-10—Arenokoites and Malokoi

Since this is an obscure word invented by Paul and translated differently in various translations, it’s helpful to look at how early Christians understood it:

Early Uses of Arsenokoitai Outside the New Testament

Source	Date	Context	What it Appears to Mean
Sibylline Oracles 2.73	c. 2nd century AD	List of immoral behaviors alongside adultery, theft, and greed	Often interpreted as referring to exploitative or abusive sexual behavior.
Acts of John	late 2nd century	Moral vice list condemning exploitative behaviors	Possibly sexual abusers or exploitative men
Theophilus of Antioch	c. 180 AD	Vice list condemning immoral acts	Probably sexual wrongdoing, exact meaning unclear
Clement of Alexandria	c. 200 AD	Condemns sexual excess and exploitation	Possibly men who exploit others sexually
John the Faster (Patriarch of Constantinople)	6th century	Penitential lists of sins	Used for various male sexual sins, including exploitation

In most early uses the word appears in **vice lists**, where each item describes **harmful actions toward others**.



1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 1 Timothy 1:9-10—Arenokoites and Malokoi

Compound words that are not a sum of their parts:

- **Hallmark – is not a mark in a hall**
- **Butterfly – is not butter that flies**
- **Ladykiller – is not a person that kills ladies, or a lady that kills**
- **Jackpot – is not a pot full of Jacks**
- **Hogwash – is not soap for washing pigs**
- **Therefore a compound word like arsenokoites cannot automatically be defined by simply combining “male” and “bed.”**

Context can give us insight. Look at 1 Timothy 1:9-10



1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 1 Timothy 1:9-10—Arenokoites and Malokoi

...realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers [10] and immoral men and homosexuals [arsenokoitais] and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching. 1Timothy 1:9-10

Terms	Type of Group
Lawless and rebellious	synonyms for lawbreakers
ungodly and sinners	synonyms for people who transgress God's law
unholy and profane	synonyms for the sacrilegious; those who dishonor the sacred
killers of fathers/mothers, murderers	types of killers
immoral men [pornois], male-bedders [arsenokoitais], kidnappers	Sexual exploitation: those involved in prostitution and those who exploit them.
liars and perjurers	synonyms for people who speak untruths



1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 1 Timothy 1:9-10—Arenokoites and Malokoi

Paul's Vice Lists Often Pair Exploiters and the Exploited

In several passages Paul lists sins that describe relationships of harm, where one person abuses another.

Examples:

Example	Description
Thieves / Swindlers	those who steal vs. those who exploit financially
Slave traders (1 Tim 1:10)	those who profit from human exploitation
Adulterers	betrayal within covenant relationships
Arsenokoitai / Malakoi	possibly describing participants in exploitative sexual systems

Observation:

Paul often condemns **systems of exploitation**, not categories of people.



1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 1 Timothy 1:9-10—Arenokoites and Malokoi

μαλακία- Malokoi—Soft, Morally Weak, Delicate, Fine, Fancy

Early Understanding of Malakoi (μαλακοί)

Source	Date	Use of the Word	Meaning / Context
Classical Greek literature (Aristotle, Plato)	4th century BC	Used metaphorically	“soft”, lacking self-control, morally weak
Septuagint (Greek OT)	3rd–2nd century BC	Used literally	“soft clothing”, delicate materials
Matthew 11:8 / Luke 7:25	c. AD 60–80	“those who wear soft clothing”	luxurious or delicate lifestyle
1 Corinthians 6:9	c. AD 55	listed among moral failings	self-indulgent, morally weak
Philo of Alexandria	1st century AD	criticizes men who live luxuriously	moral softness / decadence
Josephus	1st century AD	describes decadent lifestyles	moral weakness from luxury
Clement of Alexandria	c. AD 200	condemns excessive luxury and effeminacy	lack of discipline and indulgence
John Chrysostom	4th century AD	interprets the term morally	weakness and indulgent living
Early monastic writers	4th–5th century	used in ascetic teachings	lack of self-control or softness of character

In Greek literature and early Christian writings, *malakoi* consistently referred to softness, moral weakness, or self-indulgent living rather than a technical sexual category.



1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 1 Timothy 1:9-10—Arenokoites and Malokoi

In light of the historical and linguistic context, many scholars note that arsenokoites may refer to men who exploit others sexually—possibly including those who purchase the services of prostitutes (likely male prostitutes in the temple culture of Corinth). This interpretation fits the immediate context of 1 Corinthians 6, where Paul moves directly from his vice list to a discussion about joining one's body to a prostitute (vv. 15–16), addressing the problem of permissive sexual immorality already present in the Corinthian church (cf. 1 Cor 5:1).

¹² You say, “I am allowed to do anything”—but not everything is good for you. And even though “I am allowed to do anything,” I must not become a slave to anything. ¹³ You say, “Food was made for the stomach, and the stomach for food.” (This is true, though someday God will do away with both of them.) But you can't say that our bodies were made for sexual immorality. They were made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about our bodies. ¹⁴ And God will raise us from the dead by his power, just as he raised our Lord from the dead. ¹⁵ Don't you realize that your bodies are actually parts of Christ? Should a man take his body, which is part of Christ, and join it to a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶ And don't you realize that if a man joins himself to a prostitute, he becomes one body with the prostitute? For the Scriptures say, “The two are united into one.”¹ ¹⁷ But the person who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him. ¹⁸ Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. ¹⁹ Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, ²⁰ for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.



1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 1 Timothy 1:9-10—Arenokoites and Malokoi

Arsenokoites / Arsenokoitai — possibly referring to men who sexually exploit others, including those who purchase sexual services.

- In the vice list, this term appears alongside *malakoi* (“soft”), a word used in Greek literature for moral weakness, decadence, or self-indulgence.
- Together the terms may describe men who exploit the “soft” or morally decadent participants in Corinth’s sexual economy.

Paul was addressing sexual practices already causing scandal within the Corinthian church (1 Cor 5:1).

Historical context backs this up: In the ancient world Corinth was so associated with prostitution that the Greek phrase “to live like a Corinthian (*κορινθιάζεσθαι korinthiazesthai*)” meant to practice sexual immorality.

