

"soft" - as in "soft robes."

In fact, literally speaking **μαλακοι** means "soft." The soft feel of rich fabrics, comfortable pillows, an infant's skin, and delicate plants are all among the things that are commonly modified by the application of this word. This is the etymological meaning of the word in its root derivation, not an idiomatic interpretation or opinion. When, throughout Greek literature, it is used in its literal sense, "tactilely soft" is its meaning.⁴

Idiomatically, **μαλακοι** is used in ways that are generally related to the literal sense of the word. It is sometimes used to describe a freshly plowed field, or a gentle touch, or a weak, sick, or frightened person. When it is used in a musical context it sometimes conveys connotations of a feminine nature and could, to that extent only, be thought of as "effeminate." One of the most common idiomatic applications of **μαλακοι**, however, is its use in classical Greek literature to describe a character flaw; in this case it generally means "weak willed" or "easily beguiled" and, as such, constitutes a negative judgement. In this context it most likely describes an inability to uphold an individual sense of moral integrity and a general weakness of conviction.

Most linguistic scholars have concluded that this particular idiomatic meaning was the one most likely intended by Paul. It was a common idiom in the Koine Greek of his time, would not have been out of character for Paul to use in this way, and actually fits quite well into the context of these two verses of 1 Corinthians. Looking at the sequence of words in 6:9 reveals an alternation between terms relating sexual sin and words relating to religious or moral failings. Interpreting **μαλακοι** idiomatically allows for the alternation to proceed un-broken.

As for how **μαλακοι** might be translated into English, perhaps "weak willed," "wishy-washy," "namby-pamby," "lukewarm," "ethically flabby," or "morally insipid" would suffice. It certainly does *not* mean "male prostitute," and while "effeminate" might apply if the subject at hand were the quality of a musical piece, such is not the case here. Contextually, the meaning should coordinate with the surrounding passage and should make sense within that context. The above alternative terms enable such coordination.

ἀρσενοκοῖται is used only twice in the New Testament,⁵ and also has the questionable distinction of being one of the few words in the Pauline vocabulary which is found nowhere else in

⁴ Henry George Liddell. Robert Scott. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1940.)

⁵ 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10.