

1 CORINTHIANS Chapter 7

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INTRODUCTION TO THIS CHAPTER: This is a lengthy chapter, dealing with certain matters which must be understood in their context and background. Consider the following three points:

1. **TWO EXTREMES:** Christianity, in the first century and continuing through its history, has been confronted with two contradictory and equally false concepts:

- a. ASCETICISM (the denial of fleshly desires and needs)
- b. LIBERTINISM (the denial of any restraints on fleshly desires)

Paul will address both these concepts in this book. Those who advocate practicing whatever one desires without restraint are wrong (chapter 6). And, those who deny a Christian can marry, or continue to function in marriage, are also wrong (chapter 7). Thus we have the truth between the two extremes.

2. **THE CORINTHIANS HAD WRITTEN TO PAUL.**

In verse 1, Paul mentions "the things whereof ye wrote unto me...." The Corinthians had written Paul several questions (as is apparent in this chapter); namely, we see about six inquiries:

- a. Should married couples continue normal sexual relations? YES, Paul answers (vv. 1-7)
- b. Should single persons get married? YES, generally (verses 8-9)
- c. Is divorce permissible for Christians? NO, under general circumstances (v. 10-11)
- d. When one partner becomes a Christian (and the other does not), is that marriage still binding? YES (verses 12-16)
- e. Should Christian fathers give their daughters in marriage? YES (vv. 25-38)
- f. May a Christian widow marry? YES, in the Lord (vv. 39-40)

3. **"THE PRESENT DISTRESS."**

This phrase (verse 26) helps explain certain teachings in this chapter. In view of the great persecution and difficulties facing 1st century Christians, there were some life-styles (such as, not marrying) that might be better in light of the prevailing hardships, but should not be understood to be the best situations in other circumstances. Could there be times it might be better not to marry? Yes, but that is not God's plan generally speaking (see Genesis 2:18).

I. RESPONSIBILITIES IN MARRIAGE, 7:1-7

A. What the Corinthians had written Paul: "...good for a man not to touch a woman"

1. What they are inquiring is, "Is it better not to get married?"
2. Some in the first century church (and after as well) seemed so to teach.

B. Paul's reason for marriage, verse 2

1. Purpose? To avoid fornication

2. This is not the ONLY Bible reason for marriage, but it is a reason: Paul is not giving a "low view of marriage," but is speaking very practically.
3. PURPOSES FOR MARRIAGE:
 - a. SOCIOLOGICAL = companionship, Gen. 2:18
 - b. INDUSTRIAL = assistance, Gen. 2:18
 - c. BIOLOGICAL = procreation, Gen. 1:27-28; 1 Tim. 2:15; 4:8; 5:14
 - d. DOMESTIC = making a home, Titus 2:3-5
 - e. MORAL = purity, 1 Cor. 7:2

C. Responsibilities in marriage, vv. 3-6

1. Husbands and wives have responsibilities one toward another.
2. Husbands and wives do not live to themselves, but for one another.

D. Paul's desire for them, verse 7

1. That all were as him, that is, UNMARRIED.
2. Why? Did Paul think celibacy better? Did he have a poor view of marriage?
 - a. NO! Compare 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 5:14; Ephesians 5:22-33
 - b. It is because of the "present distress" (verses 26, 29-31)
 - (1) Great persecution had arisen - under these circumstances, marriage and family would be difficult to maintain; celibacy would be better because of the conditions prevailing in society at the time.
 - (2) Compare Luke 21:23; 1 Thessalonians 3:7; 2 Corinthians 6:4; 12:10

3. But note: *GOD'S GIFT*

II. PAUL ADDRESSES FOUR GROUPS, 7:8-40

A. TO THE UNMARRIED AND WIDOWS, vv. 8-9

1. It is good for them to remain unmarried.
2. But if they cannot contain, it is better to marry than burn (with passion, v. 2)

B. TO THE MARRIED, vv. 10-11

1. Let not the wife depart from her husband.
2. This is not just Paul's commandment, but the Lord's (see Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-12; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:14-18).
3. She is to remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband; the husband is not to put away his wife (for further teaching by Paul, see Romans 7:1-3).

C. TO THE REST: MIXED MARRIAGES (Christians to non-Christians), vv. 12-24

1. Remain married (becoming a Christian does not obliterate one's former obligations!)
2. If a brother has a non-Christian wife, and she stays with him, he is not to put her away.
3. If a sister has a non-Christian husband, she is not to leave him.
4. Why should the believer stay with the unbeliever? SANCTIFICATION

5. The legitimacy of children is at issue: *the marriage, even if between two persons religiously not similar, is still a valid marriage recognized by God.*
6. "Not under bondage": This is a phrase much distorted.
 - a. Remember the context: *each one having own spouse; not defrauding one another; not departing unbelieving mate.*
 - b. If an unbeliever chooses to separate, the believer may have no choice but to accept it; the obligation (marriage responsibilities) enjoined upon the married couple could no longer be fulfilled, thus "not under bondage."
7. "Walking as God hath distributed," verses 17-24.

A NOTE ON THE PHRASE "SPEAK I, NOT THE LORD" (verse 12)

1. Some have thought that this phrase means that Paul was merely "giving his opinion" on something, rather than telling what the Lord said.
2. NO! Paul was an inspired apostle (see John 14:25-26; 16:12-13; 1 Cor. 14:47; Eph. 3:3-5; et al.) and as such taught "the commandments of the Lord" (14:37).
3. The phrase simply means that Paul is addressing a matter about which the Lord did not personally speak while He walked on earth.
4. We must never get the impression that what Jesus said in the Gospels are the only words of importance; rather, He had much other instruction to impart to His disciples (see the verses above), which He did in the rest of the New Testament.
5. The matter under discussion here is an example of that!

D. TO VIRGINS, vv. 25-38

1. Paul's inspired judgment: abide in the same condition.
2. The reason for this instruction is "because of the present distress"
3. If a virgin marries, she will have trouble in the flesh (see above), and there will be fleshly obligations.
4. Paul addresses a father with a virgin daughter, vv. 36-38

E. TO WIDOWS, vv. 39-40

1. The widow is bound to her husband as long as he lives (Romans 7:1-4).
2. But if he be dead, she can marry, but only "in the Lord."