

1 Corinthians 7

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 29 August 2016 21:14

“...wherein he is called, therein abide...”

Though this chapter is primarily about sexual behaviour, marriage and the single life, its principles apply beyond these things. It is obvious from this chapter that someone in the Corinthian church had written to Paul, with a question, probably about sexual behaviour before marriage. Today, similar questions arise, and are familiar territory to pastors.

Did the Corinthian Christian who wrote his query have any intention of following Paul's advice (or, command from God, in some instances)? In a large thesis I wrote on Christians and mental illness, I devoted a portion to sexual responses. I noted that the sexual sins were by far the easiest to commit because they were almost 'instant' forms of gratification and readily available.

Even though sex is only a small part of any person's whole life, it is modern practice to make it a greater element in one's life than it needs to be. Sadly, much of it is either perverted or not consistent with Christian faith, and many younger Christians cast aside their promises of chastity as soon as an opportunity to have sex arises = destroying their promises to God and changing their thinking forever.

Much of the chapter is devoted to marriage and what it means. It is interesting that nowhere in scripture do we find 'love' to be the foundation of a marriage. In reality, of course, this love is one of the basic requirements. Even so, it is not the foundation stone of any marriage. What matters is the simple fact that once married the two people become 'as one'. This means that no matter what happens, that one-ness remains for life, regardless of love or lack of it.

Very often lack of love, or the supposed loss of love that once existed, is given as a reason for divorce. It is true that few married couples bother to approach their pastor or some other mature Christian with their marriage problems. This usually happens because they have not bothered to speak to God about it, either. Or, if they have, they have not done so with a sincere wish to have the problems resolved. In other words, their commitment to living as God commands is superficial, as their refusal to deal with the issue Biblically proves.

There can be many reasons why this refusal has taken place. There can be numerous factors involved, some of them quite justifiably problematic. But, at 'bottom line', the problem is not the problems themselves, but the inherent disbelief within the hearts of those who wish to rush

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toward sexual fornication, matrimonial discord and even divorce.

Over the years I have dealt with a number of divorce cases and cannot remember in even one of those cases a time when the couple have bothered to approach me before it was too late. Right now, whilst I am interpreting this text as it is given, I am also aware of a problem within a marriage between people I know, so this study is partly for them.

Usually, Christians come to me *after* they have decided it is all over, as though wishing me to condone their actions. Thus, their attitudes are already hardened and divorce, in their eyes, is inevitable. Often, when given scriptural counsel, and though claiming salvation to be real in their lives, their response is one of bitterness and even anger toward myself. But, I cannot lie to them or pretend that they have grounds for divorce.

They then go their own ways, intent on doing what they wish to do, rather than listen to scriptural counsel. Once they go through with their plans, they have strayed far from God's path. Indeed, they began their downward spiritual fall long before, when they decided to think only sinful thoughts about their situation.

This is the proof of their true intent toward God, for, as Jesus Christ bluntly said, if we claim to love Him we will do whatever He says! That includes not divorcing without reason, and even if we have one of the two reasons given in scripture, we should try to avoid divorce, because divorce is not given as a right but as a waiver of God's plan for our lives. Those who divorce without good reason automatically dishonour the Lord and this will follow them all the days of their lives.

To me, as one who gives counsel, the worst thing is not that someone divorces without good reason, but that they will not repent and turn back to God. It does not matter what the situation is – if we turn to God, repent, and ask Him to guide us only in His ways, He will give us His loving support straight away. Then, whatever the problem, it evaporates and is replaced by God's plan – and this can often be very surprising in its outcome. In the case of the proposed divorce, it will lead to God providing that missing love... if both partners are willing to act in a Christian manner and lose their inward-looking attitudes.

I have listened to too many pre-divorce 'reasons' to retract what I say above. I have come

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across no valid reasons for divorce in any of the cases I have dealt with. What happens is that one or both partners *convince* themselves of reasons why they 'should' divorce. They then think about a coming divorce and do not allow any reasons against it to arise in their hearts and minds, even if they are Biblical. Thus, they are building up a hardened attitude, which is, basically, sin. Satan will be only too happy to go along with this and will provide plenty of ammunition, particularly as the partner/s will not talk to a pastor for guidance.

So, the reason why partners do not take the matter to anyone else until it is too late, is not that they have good reason for divorce, but precisely because they do *not*! I have witnessed the same kind of refusal and reasoning in those who live their lives as neurotics... they prefer their road of shame and inner turmoil to the demands of a holy God. Such folk want what *they*

want (to them, what God wants is irrelevant). They want divorce. They want freedom without good reason. That is why they do not discuss their supposed problems with a pastor to begin with. That is why they wait until it is all but over, before seeing him. Sin. That is all it is.

The same goes for Christians who live together outside of marriage. (This is the main thrust of the arguments put forward by Paul in this chapter – it is not about those who 'make mistakes' (once only – anymore and it is deliberate sin) before marriage, but about those who make a deliberate plan to live together in blatant disregard of God's word and commands).

It is a fact that large numbers of Christians live with their partners outside of marriage. They wish to have the sexual pleasures of being together without the commitment to each other, or the sanctity of marriage given by God. Why? If they are honest there is only one reason for them living outside of marriage – all they want is 'free sex' with a built-in 'let-out' clause! It is much easier to leave an unmarried partner than to divorce. Hence their living together. It is made very easy to do so today, by laws devised by Satan and worked out by men who follow him. No-one says anything now, whereas just a few decades ago it was frowned upon and had no legal status.

The overall principles in this chapter are more far-reaching than divorce, living together, or fornication. They cover our whole attitude toward life and God. How many of us prefer our own thoughts and desires, to those of God? Be honest! We will mull-over sinful thoughts until we have rationalized reasons why we 'should' be sinful! Listen to the obnoxious reasons given by homosexuals for their behaviour... 'love' and 'God's tolerance', etc! There you will find the natural progression of extensive and pervading sin. Those who prefer their own desires to those of God are already in deep sin and have no desire to get out of it again, such is their involvement in their sin. And so many of them commit their sexual sins, apologising to God only

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after they have had their lust satiated! That is, deliberate sin – and they know it.

You would think that if someone casts aside God's word for their own sins or lusts, they would be happy. Ironically, they are far from happy and will never be happy whilst they live in their sin. Yet, they continue to practice the same sins, and become even worse as time goes on. As a result they become inwardly bitter, depressed, or anxious.

But, will they repent and turn back to God, the only answer they can have to their situation? No, they just carry on regardless, becoming more sinful and more depressed. The drug addict feels terrible and is physically ill. The heavy smoker coughs and splutters through the day, looking just as 'blousy' as those who drink to excess, and both 'enjoy' worsening health and ongoing problems.

The divorced person is far more likely to marry and divorce again, perhaps several times, because they do not ever find their 'true love'. They do not find him or her, because, in God's eyes, the only opportunity they had was with their original partner! They could not see it, because they had already built-up their sinful reasons for divorce. If they had only submitted their whole life to God in the first place, this would not have given them so much grief. It is also a fact that once one has broken a 'taboo' (something forbidden by God) it becomes much easier to break it again, plus other 'taboos'. The conscience becomes blunted and eventually killed-off!

So, as you read this chapter, employ a mind and heart ready to learn what God says. Do not reject God, but reject your own reasoning, which is bound to be faulty. Do not think, if you decide to ignore these words, that you are making your own decision... no, if you choose sin over holiness, you are being forced along a route already picked for you by Satan: your 'little fling' was his way to accustomise you to sinning even more at a later date. He has noted your preference for your own sin and he will reinforce it with so many false reasons why you should continue in your sin! That is why you will not speak to your pastor or some other mature Believer, or stop what you do. Do not delude yourself, reader. See what is truly going on and choose God!

Verses 1&2

1.

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“Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.

2.

Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.”

‘Now,’ says Paul, ‘let us go on to other things – let me reply to your questions concerning fornication.’ Evidently, some were ‘living in sin’ and they wanted to know what to do. Paul does not become hysterical, but he delivers a measured response. Remember, Paul, though rebuking the Corinthians, treats them as Christians who need guidance, not as those who should be instantly whipped and evicted. The final discipline of casting out comes a long way down the line. But, it begins with Christian logic and scriptural teaching, in the hope that Christians who sin will repent and turn back to the truth and holy living.

Fornication is the problem dealt with in these verses. Please note what has already been said; no mention is made of ‘love’ in Paul’s response. If we are open about it, how many can define ‘love’? So, how can we use a lack of it to reason our way to a divorce? Often, love is an instant attraction. It can be for one or more reasons that we rarely think about... it might be the way someone’s eyes twinkle, or the way they laugh, the way they walk or talk, their clever mind, their caring attitude, and so on. However, the main attraction is usually sexual (lust) – maybe not overtly, but an overall impression of ‘chemistry’... the glance become a gaze, and that becomes a desire. Note, too, that in a Christian fornication also involves lying, deception and rejection of God’s commands.

A sexual response is not necessarily ‘sin’, but is a part of the way God has given to us for mutual attraction (when undertaken properly – ‘having sex’ is just an animalistic reaction when unconnected with marriage). At this time I will not enter into further definitions, because it will take us away from the main issues. Suffice to say that Paul is telling people to marry rather than live together outside of marriage, because such is sin. But, once married, *for whatever reason*, the marriage is for life. Obviously, most people live together or have sex for lustful sexual reasons and only discover negative things about their partners after marriage. They were so bound up in sex and instant gratification, that they did not give a sideways glance at anything else. “I didn’t know” is not an excuse, not even in human civil law.

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Certain things, once experienced, have life-long consequences. Sex and marriage are two of them. What causes the problems is not any problem within a marriage, but the refusal to consider God. Once you start to think about divorce, even vaguely, you have opened up a door that ought never to have been opened at all. By entertaining the thought you have brought in the devil! He pushed it at you like bait on a hook. Once he sees the faintest of interest, he will reel you in like a fish caught in a river. And, like any good seducer, he will ensure that you convince yourself that you have arrived at your decision all on your own!

Always remember, temptation is not a sin, but *dwelling* on it is the start of sin. The longer you dwell on it, the more likely it is that you will carry out what you have thought about and the worse becomes the sin. Beware!

The command is very clear: if you are considering having sex, or are living with your partner, it is better to get married (so long as you are 'equally yoked'). And if later you find that you do not wish to remain married, well, that is something you will need to work out. It is no reason for divorce. It will either be your personal Waterloo and downfall, or you will rise like a phoenix from the ashes of your own selfish, sinful desires.

Verses 3-7

1.

"Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

2.

The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his body, but the wife.

3.

Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

4.

But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment.

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5.

For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.”

Once married there are certain obligations placed upon each partner. For example, the husband must ‘render’, **apodidomi**, ‘due benevolence’ to his wife. That is, he must show her good will and kindness, peace and best wishes, because it is ‘due’. It is his duty and her right. Such behaviour is owed to her by reason of marriage. The same rights are owed by the wife toward her husband, so it is an equal requirement.

Yet, how many married couples have I come across who show no kindness at all, no goodwill, and no concern, toward each other? The word ‘due’, **opheilo**, carries with it the idea of accrual. So, marriage is worked at, it is not an instant remedy or success. Very often problems arise because there is no accrual or patience, only a desire to remain as one was when single! There is no working at the marriage, only a constant fight against being a couple, being ‘as one’. There is no acknowledgement that, in God’s eyes, the marriage is a formal agreement in (God’s) law, with formal legal requirements.

That is why ‘benevolence’ is ‘due’ by God’s law. Each partner in the marriage must, as a duty of God’s law, give of his or her very best to the other, and always seek their well-being and the growth of sincere devotion. It is only when we try to avoid these duties that trouble begins. A good example of this avoidance is in the realm of ‘women’s liberation’, when women kick against God’s plan for their lives and try to avoid what He says. They hate their role as mother and wife and try to be ‘equal’ to men in ways not given by God. And so we see much trouble!

Verse 4 tells us that a married person may not withhold sexual union from his/her spouse. It is modern parlance to say that a woman has control over her own body, but according to God she does not. In marriage her body belongs to her husband, and the husband’s body belongs to his wife. And both bodies belong to God. This legal binding together is a shadow of what is to come, **soma**; the mystical union of Christ with His bride, the Church.

It is no coincidence that this union, **soma**, is rooted in **sozo**, meaning to be saved and kept

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safe and sound, or to be made whole. In marriage, two people are made whole, brought together and made one. When both comply with God's requirements in marriage, they remain safe from danger and are safe. When they stray from this requirement they are open to grave dangers.

In verse 5 we see that married couples must not 'defraud' each other. Defraud is **apostereo** – to rob or despoil, to keep back by fraud. Partly based on

stereo

, it means not to deprive the other person of any right of marriage, including sexual union. If each partner is happy not to have such union, then that is acceptable. But, if one is denied such union consistently without reason, it is an act of fraud against the other. Each partner has the right to sexual union.

There is one exception: that is, if each consents to the suspension of sexual union for a short while. This is for a specific purpose, such as fasting and prayer. Otherwise, sexual union is a right of each spouse. One partner may not simply deny it because he or she does not wish to have such union. Usually, those who do so complain that their spouse is 'sex mad' or that it is 'all he/she ever thinks about'.

They do not consider that it is to the fore of the spouse's mind only because it is his or her legal right and a natural desire given by God! To put it another way, the person denied food will tend to think more and more about food, the longer he is denied it! It is not that he is suddenly a 'glutton'!!

Apart from sexual union being the right of every married person, it also prevents the denied spouse from 'straying' into the arms of an illicit lover (verse 5). Paul warns that if a person denies his/her spouse rightful sexual union, then Satan will use this to drive him or her into the arms of another. It is true that such an action is due to 'incontinency' or lack of self-control, but the partner is held to be initially at fault for denying a legal duty to the other. So, the one who strays may not find solace in God for straying, nor can the spouse claim freedom from blame. Both are to blame in different ways.

Paul says that this part of his statement is not a command of God, but is made by him personally, 'by permission' or indulgence. Even so, Paul believes strongly that though his words are his own, they are a proper extension or dogma of God's doctrine or command. Therefore, they ought to be followed.

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His personal reason for saying it, is that he would prefer it if everyone was single just as he was, so that they could work tirelessly for God without the hindrance of having a wife or husband. Even so, Paul recognizes that this is his personal feeling and not God's command. Each must follow the path God has given him or her: 'his proper gift', or benefits given by God for their own use. Thus, some will be given marriage and others will be gifted to remain single.

Note that Paul expects that a single Christian will use his or her single state to advance God's kingdom. One should not view being single as an excuse to do whatever one wishes, or to continually seek for a partner.

Verses 8-11

1.

"I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.

2.

But if they cannot contain, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn.

3.

And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, let not the wife depart from her husband:

4.

But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife."

Paul says that he advises the unmarried and widows to remain unmarried, if this is how God leads them, as He led him. But, if they cannot 'contain', **egkrateuomai**, they must marry. 'Contain' means to show self-control and be sexually continent, like an athlete who must remain in top form, by denying himself harmful things, or things that will reduce his power.

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Thus, if a man or woman cannot control his or her sexual desires, rather than 'burn' with lust they must marry (again assuming they are both believers and so 'equally yoked'). Again, note that 'love' does not really enter into it, though it is a wonderful element. But, whatever the starting-point or reason for a marriage, both partners must thereafter work at it, to make the marriage sound and worthy.

The only reason one partner cannot 'love' another is sheer self-will and a refusal to act in a godly manner. Love, then, is also to be worked at. This is found in marriages where both partners say they loved each other at first, but the love seemed to 'die'. *Of course* it will 'die' if it is not fed and encouraged! Usually, it 'dies' because each partner cannot be bothered to keep the marriage and love alive.

Paul calls on the couple to maintain their married state. The wife may not leave her husband: this is not Paul's preference but is a command of God. I know a man who openly told me that he would rather die than leave his illicit lover (whom he married outside of God's will). He even said he would rather kill himself than remain with his legitimate wife! Death, whether natural or by suicide, will never rid a person of guilt or of facing God. They will merely meet Him all the quicker, and the illicit partner will not be seen again anyway! So, the threat is neither valid nor logical. It just shows how illogical and irrational that person has become by not listening to God.

If, however, the woman ignores this command, then, once she has parted from her husband (the same applies to the husband, of course), she cannot legitimately marry another. Civil law is irrelevant in all this, as you may gather. So, a person who leaves a marriage may not marry in his or her lifetime, and may not live with another and have sexual union outside of marriage. That most reject this, is shameful.

He or she is, then, unable to enjoy another partnership for life. Far better to remain within the marriage and work at its restitution! Nor may a partner just get rid of his wife/her husband. Only two reasons are given for divorce, and those two are only given out of sufferance by God, not as a right. Divorce is always a sign of personal failure to comply with God's command concerning marriage. It goes back even farther, though, to the time when both partners should have examined the other person deeply before getting married.

Verses 12-16

1.

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“But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.

2.

And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.

3.

For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.

4.

But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases; but God hath called us to peace.

5.

For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?”

Paul must have been responding to a personal query, for he then says “to the rest of you, I say this...”. Again, Paul states that what he has to say is his own belief. Bear in mind that Paul was called by God to teach and preach, and even his personal statements should be taken seriously.

If a man has an unbelieving wife, or a saved wife has an unbelieving husband, but the unbelieving one does not wish to leave the marriage, then that is acceptable. **To put this in context, we are speaking of a marriage undertaken before one or both partners become saved.** It is a duty of all Christians never to marry an unbeliever, because he or she is ‘unequally yoked’. We may have many unsaved acquaintances, but they must never take the place of saved friends to the extent of getting married to one. The unsaved person must be ‘pleased’ to remain married. That is, he or she approves of and accepts the Christian beliefs and biblical ways of the saved

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person, or, at any rate, does not oppose them.

The next statement has commonly been misinterpreted by so many Christians: that the unbelieving partner is 'sanctified' by the believing partner. This does not mean the unsaved person is regarded as saved, or that he or she is somehow made 'righteous'. It means that God approves of the marriage (rather than fornication), because He cannot approve of divorce without reason. The word for 'sanctified' is **hagiazō** and it can mean purified, or made holy, or it can mean to acknowledge. It is the latter meaning that applies in this case, for the unsaved *cannot* be holy or pure. God, then, acknowledges or accepts the marriage for the sake of the saved person.

If God could not offer such acceptance, then any *children* from the marriage would be unacceptable to God in the ceremonial sense. But, because one partner is saved, the children are held to be 'holy'. That is, they are held to be 'clean' within the marriage by reason of the one who is saved. They are not thereby saved in any sense, but their presence, as a product of the marriage, is accepted by God.

However, if the unsaved partner cannot tolerate the beliefs and practices of the other, and leaves, then he or she may divorce. If he or she does so, the rules of marriage no longer apply to the saved person, who is then free to marry another. Rather, both partners may act in harmony and peace.

This idea of peace and harmony has a purpose, apart from stopping daily rows and discord. Who knows, says Paul, if proper treatment of the unbelieving wife or husband might lead to their salvation? If we observe failing marriages, we can see and hear blazing rows and intense hatred. There is no way that an unbelieving partner can equate this with salvation or a good God! But, if the believer treats his partner with respect and offers the best a marriage can offer, together with all the hallmarks of a Christian character, it is possible the unbeliever might veer toward the things of God and be saved. (If elect in the first place).

Verses 17-24

1.

"But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.

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2.

Is any man called being circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised.

3.

Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.

4.

Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.

5.

Art thou called being a servant? Care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.

6.

For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant.

7.

Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.

8.

Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God."

The point Paul wishes to make in this chapter is that each person must remain faithful to the position he or she is put in by God. If married, stay married in all fidelity. If single, remain single so long as you can remain celibate and without lusting after another. (Note that lusting is a deliberate activity which includes ignoring God's commands, so the thoughts are also sin)

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God, he says, has 'distributed', or given, a different circumstance to every person individually, and each of us must stay faithful to that circumstance. It is up to each saved person to act in a holy and pure way, no matter what his allotted circumstance in life is. If he hates what God has dealt him, then he is hating God, not the circumstance.

If God has placed us in a particular circumstance, then rest assured that it is for our good and is the best option open to us, no matter how we wish to construe it. If we hate our given circumstance it is either because we have put ourselves into a sinful position in the first place, or we are kicking against God's choice for our lives.

Either way, the answer is to remain faithful, by being holy and pure. In the case of divorce or not, it does not matter if we enter marriage full of love, or without a good reason - once we are married we must remain faithful to God and make that marriage work, no matter what. Divorce, apart from the two reasons given by God, is never an option, so the Christian must do the opposite: work at redeeming the marriage and making it a true relationship acceptable to God.

These are commands Paul gives to every church.

They are common rules that everyone must obey. It does not matter if a Jew becomes a Christian ('being circumcised', verse 18) – that Jew must 'become uncircumcised', or, he must no longer think of himself as being a Jew (except in national terms), but a Christian. That is how God has called him. If, however, a gentile becomes a Christian, he should not become a Jew to please the Jewish Believers. He must remain a saved gentile, uncircumcised. That is how *he* has been called.

Being circumcised or no longer an issue to Paul or to God. The important thing is that each of us, when saved, remains faithful to our calling, whatever our circumstances. What matters is that we obey God's commands. In this we are all equal.

If a man is bound to a master (here Paul refers to being a slave), then so what? If he is able to become free, by permission of his master, then that would be fine. But, if not, he must remain happy in his circumstance. If a slave can get himself freed, then all the better, for no man may

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deliberately enter into slavery to another. This is because a man who is saved is the servant of Christ, and no man can have two masters. Yet, though a servant of Christ, he is thereby free! There is freedom only in being bound by God.

We are the servants of Christ because He has bought us with a price: His death on the cross (verse 23). We are made free in Christ: free from sin's end and the Mosaic laws, but bound to Him. Because of this, if at all possible, we should try to be rid of slavery to another. This truth applies today. We are bought by Christ and should not deliberately become bound to other human beings. This can mean a job, or status, or money, or anything else that causes us to lose our true standing in Christ. But, whatever our calling in life, we must remain faithful to God.

Verses 25-28

1.

“Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.

2.

I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be.

3.

Art thou bound unto a wife? Seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife.

4.

But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.”

Paul then talks about ‘virgins’ or the unmarried, males or females. Paul says that what he says is not a direct command from God, but is based on his role as saved teacher of the saved and worthy to be heard. He is responding to some crisis in the church at Corinth, hence his words are for “this present distress” or circumstance. It is good, in the present situation, for a man to

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remain unmarried (but celibate).

However, if a man is married, he must not try to become divorced. The same applied to married women. If, on the other hand, a person is single, then he should not look especially to be married for the sake of it. However, if either person wishes to marry, it will not be a sin.

If, though, a single woman marries, it will not be sin, but she will know 'trouble in the flesh' which he did not wish to elaborate upon. What was this trouble? As the marriage itself is not sinful, Paul was referring to the bodily pain of being in labour, the lot of every woman since Eve, except for the single, who do not have children. Or, at least, they ought not to have children outside of marriage.

Verse 29-35

1.

"But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none;

2.

And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not;

3.

And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.

4.

But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord:

5.

But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.

1 Corinthians 7

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 29 August 2016 21:14

6.

There is a difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

7.

And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.”

Paul then says that the time is short. Is he talking about the end of the world, or the end of Jewish civilization, when Rome would devastate Jerusalem and scatter Israel far and wide? The verses that follow (29-31) serve to teach that a time was coming when one's circumstances would be swallowed up in a future culmination of the age, so we must all be found faithful when it happens. We must be found true to God and not doing what the world does.

Those who are single do not have to worry about providing for wives/husbands and children, and this is preferable to being married and tied to such worries (verse 32). Rather, being single, they can devote all their energies to pleasing God. How this should be learned today by single people! Most think they are single to enjoy themselves and to do whatever they wish. They do not think that they are single in order to serve God! Yet, how many strive to find a person to marry?

The single should be holy in body and in spirit. They are not single in order to 'sow their wild oats', as so many do today. They must show a holy walk and a holy character, devoted to the things of God. The married man or woman, of necessity, must devote much time to spouse and children, and maintaining them. Single people are free of such burdens.

Paul is saying this for their benefits, not as a warning. If single, do the things of God with all fervour and holiness, not being distracted by the trappings of marriage. At least until and if marriage is given to them by God.

Verses 36-40

1 Corinthians 7

Written by K B Napier
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1.

“But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry.

2.

Nevertheless he that standeth steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well.

3.

So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better.

4.

The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.

5.

But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.”

After saying all this, Paul advises the single man that if he thinks his behaviour is not appropriate in the light of what God requires, then it is better for him to marry. This is not necessarily referring to a woman past her prime. It can also simply refer to a virgin who is in danger of defilement. It is this interpretation that best serves this text. That is, it is better for a couple to marry than for them to enter into a state of fornication. (Again, it must be repeated that a Christian must only marry another believer).

But, if a person is able to control his own desires, both in mind and in body, then let him remain single. This is certainly not found in many, who might not do something in body, but whose minds contain much lust and desire.

1 Corinthians 7

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The man who gives away his daughter in rightful marriage does not sin, but if he keeps her single, all the better (for reasons given above). The married person remains bound to his or her partner for life, but if the partner dies, the remaining partner is free to either remain single or get married again, so long as the other person is a Christian (verse 39).

However, if she remains unmarried, she will probably be happier, in Paul's opinion, which, he thinks, is rooted in God's plans. Of course, this state of being single is good in the sense that the person does the work of God and is not simply single without cause.

Really, these injunctions also apply to us all, for each of us must work toward God and for His glory, whether we are married or not. Paul is merely saying that the single are able to do far more than someone who is married, for obvious reasons. But, it does not mean we may divorce under the pretext of doing God's will, as has happened in the past. I have heard of people leaving their families (but not divorcing) and going on the mission field for many years, thus badly affecting their family relationships. Using the guise of doing a work for God they have sinned by not providing properly for their families. Thus the pretext was only an excuse to get away and to do something one wished to do. God does NOT call us to this kind of 'sacrifice'.

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