

**Ministry of The Holy Spirit
For The Present Distress
1 Cor 7:17-40**

Last time...Apostolic Marriage Counselling and a Great Mystery regarding Marriage

In the marriage relationship, our bodies are for

1. The Lord
2. our Spouse
3. us/Self

Fornication:

- Self-pleasing and Self-serving
- sin...rebellion against all of God's Word (Matt 22:36-40)
- not the purpose of our bodies (1 Cor 6:13b)

But what is the marriage relationship?

A Great Mystery

1 Cor 7:10-11 with Eph 5:32

- one male + one female = one man (Gen 1:26-27)
- with the Lord the Creator as the 3rd Person governing the relationship and both the husband and the wife
- until death...last breath

- The husband dying to Self and loving his wife as Christ loves the Church gives the wife her one need – security
- The wife submits to the leadership of the husband as the Church does to Jesus and gives the husband his one need – respect

- Law: only the husband can divorce his wife, no provision for the wife to divorce her husband
- God hates divorce (Mal 2:16)

- Jesus Christ will not break the Law, He fulfilled the Law
 - Matt 5:17 and Rom 10:4
 - John 5:43 and Heb 10:7

 - John 10:27-30
 - Jesus is eternal
 - He gives His Bride Eternal security...
 - eternal life, death being overcome

- Rom 5:20-21
- John 17:20-23
- Heb 13:5
- 2 Cor 11:3

- Jesus will NOT divorce His Bride, not even for fornication (spiritual unfaithfulness, backsliding), and marry another
1 John 1:9
- He will not tear asunder what God has joined together – His Son and His Bride (“in Christ”)

- If the Bride leaves (backslides), she is to remain unmarried (for she is already married and her leaving did not change that fact) and be reconciled to her husband (1 John 1:9)

- The unbeliever (NOT a member of the Bride) can leave and the Prince of Peace will live in peace with His Bride

The Bride of Christ is secure in Christ!

The Body of the Bride belongs to Jesus Christ

Give Him the benevolence/kindness/intimacy/respect He is due!

This time...moving forward: more teaching about marriage

With Paul’s Apostolic Marriage Counselling (his opinion albeit Godly wisdom)...

v1-9, 12-16

sandwiching Paul speaking authoritatively the Lord’s commandment...

v10-11

and

With the Creator God having said...

“It is not good that man is alone.”

“Be fruitful and multiply.”

“It is very good.”

and the Apostle Paul now saying

“It is good for a man not to touch (be attached to i.e. marriage) a woman.”

“I would that all men (male and female) were even as myself (celibate).”

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

and

With this Epistle not being the first correspondence between the church at Corinth and the Apostle Paul on this issue...

How are we to understand 1 Cor 7 concerning marriage?

v26a

key phrase: for the present distress

Historical context helps to illuminate this chapter

1. At this time in the Roman Empire (this Epistle was written about 56 AD)

Persecution of the Church by the Roman Empire has started

Claudius (41 – 54 AD)

A pervert of the first order...all things 1 Cor 6:9-10

In 52 AD he expelled all Jews from Rome (Acts 18:1-2)

“Christians” were considered a sect of Judaism

The unbelieving Jews persecuted the believing Jews

Disturbing the peace, which Rome did not tolerate

Nero (54 – 68 AD)

His mother was married to Claudius

She murdered her husband so her son would be Caesar

With leadership like that, the Church believed Roman persecution was going to get more intense

As did the unbelieving Jews, so is the Roman Empire –

- do not know the Truth
- have “declared war” on the Truth

John 15:18-21 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

The Church was living in troublesome days

2. Paul’s personal history as persecutor of the Church

Acts 8:1-3

Acts 9:1-2

Acts 26:9-11

Gal 1:13

ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it.

Bearing in mind 1 Cor 6:20, let's move forward

v17 distributed...called:

So, as it relates to being married or being celibate, every person should be as God
had given to them and called them

Both are good gifts of God, one is not more righteous in God's eyes than the other
Neither are 2nd class citizens in the kingdom of God

Paul has so ordained/prescribed/ordered in all the churches/fellowships

Therefore, be faithful to your calling
Serve the Lord and follow Him right now as His witness and ambassador
right where He has placed you

To make his point about neither married nor celibate being more righteous than
the other, Paul cites 2 examples of

- 2 kinds of calling
- 2 kinds of people

v18-20 circumcised...uncircumcised:

The first example deals with the mystery of the Church: Jew and Gentile

If you were called, and accepted the call of the Lord to follow Him, as a Jew –
don't become a Gentile

If you were called, and accepted the call of the Lord to follow Him, as a Gentile –
don't become a Jew

Remember Acts 15

One is not more righteous than the other, neither are 2nd class citizens in the
kingdom of God

Circumcision does not save anyone from eternal death,
neither does uncircumcision

What God has called both Jew and Gentile to do is: Love

Matt 22:36-40

John 3:16 with John 6:28-29

John 13:34-35

Rom 13:10

Therefore, as He had so said, circumcision is of the heart

Deut 10:16

Jer 4:4

Rom 2:28-29

Having circumcised your heart and born-again of the Spirit of God, abide/remain
in your calling – Jew or Gentile

v21-24 servant...free:

The 2nd example of 2 kinds of callings and 2 kinds of people deals with the
2 kinds of people in the Roman Empire – slaves and freemen

If you are called, and accepted the call of the Lord to follow Him, as a slave –
serve Him right there

Do not be anxious or concerned about your social station, be faithful to
your calling

But if you are given an opportunity to win your freedom in the Roman
Empire, take advantage of it!

Whether a slave or a freeman, both are

- set free by Jesus (John 8:31-32, 36)...from the chains of sin and death
- servants of the Lord

Col 3:23-24 And whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord,
and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye
shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye
serve the Lord Christ

Therefore neither slaves nor freemen in the Roman Empire are more righteous
in God's eyes than the other

Neither is a 2nd class citizen in the kingdom of God

Therefore, be faithful to your calling,

- right where you are
- being simultaneously free in Christ and a servant of Christ

Because you are bought with a price...

- Ch 6:19-20
- purchased/redeemed from the devil's slave market

serve the Lord Who ransomed you with His blood, a freed and willing servant

God has His children right where He wants them to serve Him

Right where you are is where ministry is (serving the Lord Jesus Christ)
Follow Jesus, seeking His will vs yours, and find out what He is doing!

After citing 2 examples of 2 kinds of calling and 2 kinds of people,

Paul gets back to the topic of this part of his letter –
the 2 callings/2 kinds of married and celibate

v25-26 virgins...no commandment...my judgment...this is good:

Speaking to and of those who are unmarried, Paul is not speaking authoritatively (“Thus saith the Lord”) but is giving his Apostolic Marriage counsel

As one who had been given the calling to be celibate AND the mercy/help to be faithful to his calling, Paul’s Godly wisdom to the unmarried...
for the present distress, the historical context of this letter...
is to remain unmarried (celibate, not a fornicator)

v27-28 bound...loosed...not sinned:

This counsel only makes sense in the historical context of “this present distress”

There are 2 kinds of callings, 2 kinds of people – married and celibate/unmarried
One is not more righteous in the eyes of God than the other
Neither is a 2nd class citizen in the kingdom of God

If you are married (where 2 become 1)...in the present distress...do not

- leave your husband
- divorce your wife

If you are unmarried (not bound to a spouse in God’s Marriage Contract)...
in the present distress...
do not seek marriage

If you as unmarried do marry, you have not sinned (against God)

But...in the present distress...life will get more complicated

The married will face a trouble/pressure/persecution the unmarried won’t
“Deny this Jesus and say ‘Caesar is God’ or we will kill your
spouse and children right in front of you!”

The Roman Empire was ruthless and tolerated no rebellion or
competition

What will you do in a moment of such intense pressure as that?
“No! Caesar is God.”

or

“No! Sweethearts, I will see you again very soon!
Follow Jesus thru this trial.”

Such persecution of Christians has happened in China

But I spare you...if you are as I (celibate/unmarried), you won’t face that
heart-rending persecution (temptation to deny Jesus)

v29-31 the time is short...the fashion of this world passes away:

Given the historical context of Christian persecution during the reigns of Claudius and Nero,

- time is short...more trouble is coming!
- the fashion of the world is passing away...the condition of the world for followers of Jesus Christ
 - married or unmarried
 - Jew or Gentile
 - slave or free
 - weeping or rejoicing
 - haves or have nots

Life is changing, things are soon going to be very different for all Christians in the Roman Empire

Right now is the time to live for and serve Jesus, right where you are!

But we have a blessed hope – as trouble is coming, so is He (Rev 22:20)!

v32-34 I would have you without carefulness:

The desire of the Apostle Paul, with the mind of Christ and the heart of the Father, is that God's people...in the present distress and always...be without anxiety about conditions in this dying world and to serve Him

Matt 6:25-34

Matt 13:22

Phil 4:6-9, 13

1 Peter 5:7

Regarding the issue at hand, the topic of several rounds of communication between Paul and the church at Corinth:

v32-33 to the men

The unmarried man is exclusively devoted to the Lord and has fewer worldly distractions in keeping his eye on the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus

The married man must be devoted to both his spouse and to the Lord, facing some worldly distractions in keeping his eye on the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus

v34 to the women

What is true for the gander is true for the goose

The unmarried woman is free to be exclusively devoted to the Lord...holy/separated unto the Lord in body AND Spirit

The married woman has a husband to please in addition to her Lord

Note: Marriage is a blessing from God, not a ball and chain
Marriage is a ministry
To serve one's spouse (vs Self) is to serve the Lord

v35 your own profit...without distraction:

Paul's Godly counsel is for the Church's advantage;
it is not to trip them up and stumble them in being faithful to one's calling
His counsel is so we would live noble and honorable lives before God and man,
serving the Lord without distraction

Historical context: devoted to the Lord in this present distress –
persecution by the Roman Empire

v36-38 uncomely toward his virgin...let them marry:

For those who are espoused (engaged, if you will):

If you think it improper to let your fiancé pass the bloom/prime of her life
(child-bearing years) and you desire to attend to her in this matter,
get married...it is not sin

But, if you are

- determined to remain celibate
- not burning (v9)
- have self-restraint over your sexual desires

you do well to remain unmarried

If you get married, you do well

If you do not get married, you do better...in this present distress,
the historical context

v39-40 wife...law...liberty...happier:

Speaking to the wives in the Church

The wife is bound to the Law (v10-11) as long as her husband has breath
(Rom 7:1-3)

But once he takes his last breath, she is free to re-marry...but in the Lord, His will
(to another believer, not unequally yoked)

But...in the present distress according to the Apostle Paul's Godly wisdom,
she would be happier/more blessed if she remained unmarried, as he was
And Paul is Spirit-filled, Spirit-led, and Spirit-inspired in so writing his advice

This passage of Scripture leads me to think that the unrecorded question the Church at Corinth had of the Apostle Paul was:

Should we marry?

If we are married, should we divorce?

Should we give our children in marriage, in these troublesome times?

Application

We live in a “present distress”

- perilous times in the last of the last days
- evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived

Since this nation has turned from God, false prophets of false gods have, as in the days of Jeremiah’s ministry to a dying nation

- caused this nation to believe lies
- taught rebellion against the Lord

Yet the God of Truth has also been working, calling a people unto Himself to come out of the nation/world (Rev 18:4): The Church, the Body of Christ, the Bride of Christ

Our filthy rags have been taken from us and we have been given new garments

- clean white linen of the righteousness of Jesus Christ
- garments of praise (Is 61:3)
- garments of salvation (Is 61:10)

We are planted in a nation where so many Gov’t leaders (Fed, State, City, School Board) that

- do not know the Truth
- have declared war on the Truth

Truth is an enemy to their agenda: power

Their *m.o.* is

- deceit
- fear
- intimidation/pressure
- force

Therefore, bearers of the Truth are

- censored
- defamed
- slandered
- arrested
- prosecuted

Communications technologies

- Apple
- Samsung
- Google
- Microsoft

and Social Media technologies

- Facebook (soon to be Metaverse, based on illusion/make-believe)
- Twitter
- Instagram

have made this war on Truth and the slander of bearers of the Truth

- instant in time
- global in reach
- continuous in “voice”

in the court of popular opinion

They have a staggering impact on the thought processes of the common person,
who has not been educated on how to think but on what to think

Nothing new under the sun – ruthless enemies of the Truth

- Roman Empire
- Holy Roman Empire
- Nazi Germany
- Communist China
- Communist Russia

- Socialist USA?

John 15:18-21 is as true for us now as it was for the Church then

We are 1 Cor 6:19-20 in troublesome days now (Days of Lot and Days of Noah)
as was the Church then

Therefore...to married, single, and espoused:

- Know your calling from the Lord – married or single (celibate vs fornication)
- Be faithful to your calling
 - Don't be single if He has called you to be married
 - Don't be married if He has called you to be single
- Serve the Lord with devotion in these troublesome days
- Know your decision to leave the world behind and follow Jesus is the best decision you have ever made!
- Fear not, be not intimidated or pressured by lies – speak the Truth in love, with meekness and gentleness
- We have a blessed hope – the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ