

1st Corinthians Chapter 7.

The first Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians.

Bill Holdstock

Marriage.

Adam Clark says about the Corinthian church.

'At this time there was great upheaval, distress and tribulation. In such times, when the people of God had no certain dwelling place, when they were lying at the mercy of their enemies without any protection from the state – the state itself often among the persecutors, he who had a family to care for would find himself in very difficult circumstances, as it would be much more easy to provide for his personal safety than to have the care of a wife and children. On this account it was much better for unmarried persons to continue for the present in their celibacy.'

The Corinthians had written a letter asking questions about certain doctrines, sending it to Paul by Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus. They did not ask about the divisions or the fornications or the other wrong doings in the church. These were told to Paul by men accompanying Chloe we read about in an earlier chapter.

It is thought that the Corinthian Church had a number of new Christians who were married. When their partners were converted to the Christian faith and the other partner remained a heathen, they thought they would have to separate and divorce so as not to be unequally yoked.

Paul later wrote to the church advising that unmarried believer should become unequally yoked by marrying unbelieving men or women.

2. Cor: 6.14

Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers for what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness and what communion has light with darkness?

But in the case of those already married where one spouse gave their life to Jesus before the other, Paul taught them to remain married to each other and not break their marriage vows.

Some thought it might be best not to marry at all in the light of the present circumstances with the church in turmoil and upheaval and the political problems brought on them from Rome by Nero.

Verse 1

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

Paul had written to the church on the issue of fornication. Fornication means sex before marriage and includes adultery if it involves another person's wife or husband. As we have discovered it was prevalent among the people in Corinth.

Paul's advice to prevent fornication is that it is better to marry than live in sin or if a man cannot control himself.

Paul says in verse 13 of chapter 6. *Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord.* When man was created he was made to commune with God. God looked forward to coming to earth in the evening and walking and talking with Adam and Eve. He made Eve for Adam as a helpmate; his partner, and He only made one partner. And it was a woman.

Verse 2

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

It is in God's provision for His creation that a man and a woman should marry. Remember Jesus condoned marriage by not only accepting an invitation to a wedding but also assisting in saving the day by providing the best wine at the table! Note the verse says that every man should have his own wife, clearly we are told not to have anybody else's wife as well and the same goes for the woman.

Verse 3

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

This means that the wife and the husband must respect each other regarding sexual desires. Paul uses a great deal of delicacy here bound up in the word 'benevolence'. Which means that the wife and husband must respect each other regarding lawful sexual needs: and fulfil the matrimonial and conjugal agreement made at the wedding ceremony, mutually satisfying each other. Some manuscripts use the word 'debt', and others 'that which is owed' and yet another 'friendship' to express the same idea. Paul's use of the word benevolence shows a kinder, softer, more loving approach to be shown by both parties. If the couple do not follow this injunction one may well be responsible for tempting the other into the infidelity of the other. Some wives think it clever to withhold themselves from relations with their husbands as a form of 'punishment' then complain when the husband finds another woman to satisfy him. Husbands don't do it! Wives don't do it either!

Verse 4

The wife has no power over her own body, but the husband, and likewise also the husband has no power over his own body but the wife.

The husband and wife when married are one body according to the Bible and they belong to each other. Neither of them has any right to refuse each other's needs under a normal proper relationship. All forms of perversion or unnatural affection must be rejected completely. God in His wisdom created man and woman and told them to multiply, that they may come together to produce children. Paul makes the exception when either wishes to spend time with the Lord in prayer and or fasting and that may be done by mutual agreement.

Verse 5

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

What you owe to each other never refuse to pay unless by mutual consent and let that be only for a short period of time lest Satan tempt you. There is no doubt this is the very time Satan will come and take advantage of and fill our minds with unholy thoughts in the midst of holy exercises. So the Bible teaches that the two should come together again without delay.

Verse 7

For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man has his proper Gift of God, one after this manner and another after that. 8. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I. 9. But if they cannot contain, let them marry for it is better to marry than to burn.

Paul wishing that all men were like him did not mean that Paul was against marriage. The verses we have looked at so far have given great help to those wishing to marry and those already married. If we said that Paul was against marriage and that marriage should cease among mankind, we are saying that human beings should no longer be propagated upon the earth and that is not what God intended. It is believed that Paul had the ability to control his sex drive to concentrate on his calling by God. Abstinence is a state that cannot be acquired by human effort; a man has it from God or not at all.

Verse 10

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

Verse 11

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

Marriage and the marriage vows are important to the Lord, He lays great store by commitment. He has committed to His creation by His death on the Cross and again shows just how much He is committed to us His people by rising from the dead and promising eternal life if we follow Him. The Lord wants that sort of commitment in marriage but many of today's couples have no commitment one to the other. Many marriages today do not last for long and if there is a problem the couple would not dream of working the problem out, it's a case of get a divorce and try someone else! (By the way in March Pauline and I will be married 59 years!)

Verse 12

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.

This situation does not provide grounds for divorce.

Verse 13

And a woman who has a husband that believeth not and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. 14. 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 they are holy.

Here this simply means that the unbeliever, by virtue of being one flesh with a Christian partner, is not considered living unlawfully. The verse also refers to the fact that the Christian has spiritual influence over the non-Christian. It does not mean the Christian could save the soul of the unbeliever, he or she has to make their own choice as to their own acceptance of Jesus and they are not the responsibility for the other partner except to pray for.

Verse 15

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

Here we have another legal and scriptural reason for divorce and remarriage. If the unbeliever refuses to live with a wife or husband because of Christianity and if she or he is determined to leave on this account, the Christian is not under further marriage bonds. Under these circumstances the Christian is to submit to the breaking of the marriage

vows.

Verse 16

For what do you know O wife whether you shall save your husband? Or you O man that you may save your wife?

Let no one misunderstand this verse, a Christian cannot save anyone. The only way to be saved is via the cross and to accept Jesus Christ as his or her personal saviour. It is only Jesus and His shed blood that can wash away our sins.

What Paul is saying here is that by living together the Holy Spirit that dwells in a Christian, together with that Christian living a Holy God fearing life will show God's love and grace towards the other partner and with prayer and love shown, the partner has an opportunity to come to Jesus. Paul takes an interlude in his dialogue of marriage to discuss the importance of living according to our calling. He later picks up the threads by discussing the way forward for those called to be widows or virgins.

Verse 17

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

Let every man fulfill his duties to which God in his wisdom has called him. God gives each of us a gift and it is up to us to find out what that gift is and run with it. God has given me the gift of creativity. My parents thought I would follow in the family trade of selling. I hated it and I felt a fish out of water. My loving gracious Grandfather then made provisions for me to train in one of the family's five shops with the promise of managing one of them when I had learned the trade. I hated it, I felt like another fish out of water. I wanted to be a graphic designer, to all of them that was thought not to be a proper trade. They all did their best to encourage me to sell nails, tins of paint, washing machines, candles, wire netting, screws and all sorts of stuff.

Then a very good friend in our church who had his own graphic Studio in London looked at some of my designs and he told my father I was a designer through and through and offered me a job. That was at the age of 16, now I am 80 years old and I have been an artist all my life and for almost 25 years had my own design studio on the south coast.

Many clients, the businessmen in the town, the town Hall many of whom I did business with, all know I was a Christian and I have spent many an hour sharing the Lord in my studio. I have never been so happy.

My wife can tell a similar story, years ago she was asked by a Christian friend what her gift was. Pauline said she had no gift except to support her husband. The Christian friend pulled a face and they prayed that Pauline be shown what her gift in God really was. Soon after Pauline had a word from the Lord that she was to stand in the gap for people who were walking through bad times. Pauline became an intercessor and many people have recognized this and asked her to pray for them through some very tough times. Pauline gets up early to pray, she prays with people on the phone, in hospital, in the shops and so on. I helped her design and print her testimony which she gives out when prompted by the Lord. A few years ago she had a brain tumor and when she tells people and they see how well and healthy she is they do sit up and listen as Pauline tells them about the Lord.

Yes we all have a gift from God, Pauline and I encourage you to seek God and find your gift, not just what your good at, but what the Lord has blessed you with, you become more secure in what you do when you recognise that you go through life with what God has given you. Paul also explains to the Corinthian church that whatever your position is, when you become a Christian, God can bless and use you just as you are so long as your heart is for God.

Verse 18

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

Paul's ministry brought many to the Lord; some were Jews and therefore had the marks of circumcision in their bodies.

Paul explained that if you became a Christian and you were circumcised not to try and become uncircumcised, if any became a Christian and you were not circumcised do not become circumcised as a part of your salvation. Christ died for your soul not your body. However true Jewish believers and their male offspring are still called upon to be circumcised but Gentile men and boys do not.

Galatians 5:6

For in Jesus Christ neither Circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision but Faith which works by Love.

Verse 20

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

Some in the church thought they were to divorce their partner because now they were Christians the partner was not.

Some were worried because they were circumcised and thought somehow they had to be uncircumcised and some the other way round. Paul explained they were to come to Jesus just as they were. God loves us just as we are and the most important thing is that our hearts are right before God and we are determined to follow after Him every day.

Paul tells the church at Corinth that even if you are a slave bought with someone else's money *'care not for it, this will not injure your Christian condition.*

Verse 23

You are bought with a price be not the servants of men.

This seems like a contradiction of a previous verse but Paul is encouraging the church with Spiritual meaning. I worked for a boss who was no more than a tyrant. He shouted, swore, bullied and traded on fear. But I knew in my heart that I was to stay in that job for some reason. We are encouraged by the Word of God to submit to those in authority above us and we are also called to be led by the Spirit. The two will not be incompatible and God's grace will give us the power to serve even ungodly masters, and will also give us the power to pray for them. I was able to live my life before the staff of about 80 and most knew of my stand for Christ. It was much later in my stay with them that the rude bully of a boss asked me about Jesus and my church and His wife came to church a couple of times with Pauline. The rest is up to the Holy Spirit, I've sown the seed!

So Paul says that we are to remember we are not our Bosses we belong to Christ and while we respect those we work for, our hearts worship the Lord.

Verse 25

Now concerning virgins I have no commandment from the Lord: yet I give my judgement as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. 26 I suppose that it is good for the present distress, I say that it is good for a man so to be.

The political and moral state of Rome was getting worse by the week and Christians were the target for all sorts of persecution that was getting closer and closer to the churches in Asia. Paul, who travelled all around Asia, knew first hand that the trouble from Nero was causing hardship to families, singles and married couples in other churches as well. So he advised that men and women stay in the state they find themselves in and to change would likely add to the calamities of the times. Paul was preparing them for impending persecutions that Nero was about to pour out on Christians.

1. Let all men be without anxiety concerning families, property and the world (v32-33)
2. Let the married live as though not married (v29)
3. Let those who weep act as though they weep not (v 30)
4. Let those who rejoice act as though they did not rejoice(v30)
5. Let those who buy live as though they did not possess (v 30)
6. Let those who use this world make proper use of it, for the very fashion of it will soon pass away (v31. 1 John 2:17)

The single men and women can attend to the things of God without much distraction. The married man or woman has many responsibilities caring for the family and home. The list above shows what might happen to the people of the church when Nero's persecution reaches their doors.

They that have wives be as they that have no wives. The persecution that was to follow would mean the Husband would be snatched away from the wife to appear before the magistrate and to be told to reject Christ or die. Corinth could not comprehend such a situation, is this what being a Christian is all about, do I have to make such a choice? Do I have to die for my faith? They don't preach this in my church!

And they that weep as though they weep not, they that rejoice as though they rejoice not.

The Christian ought to consider what we own, what we have, what we have bought, what we have sold, these are as nothing compared to our eternal destiny in Christ Jesus. Our tears are for a short time, our joy is forever. There will come a time, and it is not far away now that Jesus will call those who truly love Him to meet Him in the sky and take us on to be with Him. ALL that we treasure down here will remain down here; we can take nothing with us. One of my brothers-in-law was doing his best to save one million pounds before he died. He was proud of the fact he was almost there when he died! What good was his striving to him when other people were to benefit.

Verse 29

But this I say, brethren the time is short: it remains that both they that have wives be as though they had none; 30 And they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice as though they rejoice not and they that buy, as though they possessed not.

Paul warned that time was short. Persecutions and distress were at the door. Nero was plotting grievous persecutions to afflict the Church of Jesus Christ and many Christians would lose their lives for the sake of the Gospel. Paul thought it was better to get your soul in order than worry about marrying or not marrying, being circumcised or not circumcised. This is a picture of our situation today, Jesus will return at any moment now, He is at the door, and world events are getting much worse, distrust among our world leaders have led millions to become displaced and walking thousands of miles through many nations to find peace, but they get killed, drowned or die of starvation as they flee from their home towns. A word we can use that is the same as in Paul's time is distress, the world is full of distress. Dark clouds are all we see in the natural and sometimes those clouds weigh very heavy. There is no peace to be found anywhere and things look black. I would encourage you to look to the Lord and ask Him to take you above the clouds. That is where He is, remember Moses in;

Exodus 24 verse 1

And the Lord said unto Moses, come up unto the Lord, you and Aaron and Nadab, and Abihu, who were Aaron's sons, and seventy elders of Israel and you shall worship afar off.

Verse 15

And Moses went up into the mount and a Cloud covered the Mount.

Verse 18

And Moses went into the mist of the Cloud...

It was in the mist of the Cloud Moses found God, all other earthly matters of Israel were left behind, he was in the presents of the Lord and nothing else mattered. Holy Spirit help each one of us to reach high up the mountain and reach that Cloud, then it would be just one more step into the mist where God is.

1 Corinthians 7 Verse 31

And they who use this world, as not abusing it for the fashion of this world passes away.

The Christian's thought must be that he is just passing through. This is not our home we only use it for a while until Jesus comes to take us to our mansion in the sky.

Verse 32

But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried cares for the things that belong to the Lord; 33 but he that is married cares for the things of the world, how he may please his wife.

Paul is showing the difference between those who concentrate on the things of God because he is not distracted from reading the Word, worshiping, and prayer and so on. And those who are married and may even have children; his time is taken up with pleasing his wife and helping to bring up his children.

1 Timothy 5: 5.

Now she who is a widow indeed and desolate, trusts God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. 6. But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives.

This desolate widow meaning she had no relatives to care for her puts all her trust, time and energy serving the Lord; she is priceless in the sight of the Lord. However the one who lives in pleasure and only to please herself is dead in spirit even though she lives.

Verse 35

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 you may attend upon the Lord without distraction.

Paul goes into detail for the benefit of the church, not to snare them, or make them feel guilty but for their benefit. He uses the illusion of the Roman soldier who carried a small casting net which he would throw over the head of his adversary, the Persians made use of a similar net called a 'command'. A larger net was used by the gladiators when fighting in the ring.

Verse 36

But if any man thinks he behaved himself uncomely towards his virgin. If she passes the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sins not.

There was a time among both Jews and Christians the daughters were wholly in the power of the father, so he might give them in marriage or bind them to perpetual virginity. However should the daughter later in life find she had affections for a man and be inclined to marry, the father could change his plans regarding her virginity and give her in marriage at any time even after the flower of her youth. In the eyes of God he sin not.

Verse 37

Nevertheless he who stands steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but has power over his own will, and has so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, does well.

If the father finds it unnecessary to change his plans regarding keeping his daughter from marriage because his daughter wishes not to marry he is obliged to keep the daughter in perpetual virginity. Verse 36 and 37 proves that it is the father who gives or does not give his virgin daughter in marriage.

Verse 39

The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband lives, but if her husband be dead she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord. 40. But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgement and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.

This seems to be an answer to a question asked by the Corinthian Church to this effect; 'Can a woman remarry whose husband is dead, or who has abandoned her?' Paul's answer was 'as long as her husband is living the law binds her to him alone; but if the husband dies she is free to marry but only another Christian.' She must not marry a non-

Christian. But Paul says, she would be happier if she continued a widow because of the 'present distress'. Paul confirms that he is speaking with the authority of the Holy Spirit else they could not be expected to obey.

There here are 20 commands concerning a marriage.

1. Let every man have his own wife. (v2)
2. Let every woman have her own husband
3. Let the husband meet the sexual needs of his wife (3-4)
4. Let the wife meet the sexual needs of her husband (4-4)
5. Defraud not each other in sexual matters; pay your conjugal vows (v5)
6. Come together again soon after you have agreed abstinence to pray and fast (v5)
7. Let both men and women marry if they have difficulties with self-control (v 9)
8. Let not the wife depart from her husband (v10)
9. If she does depart let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband (v11)
10. Let not the husband divorce his wife (11)
11. Let not a Christian man divorce the non-Christian if she be pleased to dwell with him (12-16)
12. Let not the Christian wife divorce her husband if he be pleased to dwell with her (v13-16)
13. If the unbeliever departs and refuses to live with the Christian, let him depart. Do not force continuance of the marriage. The Christian is freed from the marriage bonds in such cases (v15)
14. Let every man or woman remain as she or he was when they became Christians (17-24) Do not use Christianity as an excuse to break up your home and perhaps seeking a new companion.
15. If you are bound to a wife seek not to be loosed (v27 Do not get a divorce regardless of the past. Stay in the same state in which you were saved (v17-24)
16. If you are loosed from a wife seek not another wife (v27) If you do marry however you have not sinned (v28)
17. You that have wives, live as though you did not have them, (29-31) See notes at the end of this list.
18. Let the father of a daughter of marriageable age be free to give her in marriage. It is no sin for him to do so or for the virgin to marry (v36-38)
19. The wife is bound by law to be married as long as the husband lives (v39) Marriage is for the lifetime of the husband or wife.
20. Christians must remarry only Christians when a companion dies (v39)

I am grateful to my friend Graham Towse for his valuable support and contribution.

Be blessed

Bill@Holdstock.com

More studies on Google, www.wordlightmypath.com