

# 1 Corinthians

## Chapter 7:1-24

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- **1 Corinthians Outline:**

- Chapter 1 Ungodly divisions result from man's wisdom.
- Chapter 2 Carnal man cannot understand our Spiritual God.
- Chapter 3 All Christians will have their labors tried by fire.
- Chapter 4 Boasting in our leaders puffs up and destroys fellowship.
- Chapter 5 Maintain the purity of the Church.
- Chapter 6 Do not dispute before the world and do not partake in sexual immorality.
- Chapter 7 Principles of marriage

- **1 Corinthians 7:1-24**

- **Introduction & Review**

Having completed his rebuke of the Corinthians for bringing lawsuits against each other, and for partaking in sexual immorality, Paul moves on to the next topic which is marriage. Given that there are basically two types of people in the world, those who are in Christ and those who are not, you then have two more categories, man and woman. When you consider these four possible types of people in the world, it is not hard to imagine that relationships can get complicated. That is the situation being addressed here by Paul. There are some complex situations that can get created when these combinations of men and women are given in marriage and especially when you see sin involved.

- **Exposition**

### 1 Corinthians 7:1-24

*Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.<sup>3</sup> Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband.<sup>4</sup> The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.*

- Paul reveals that he is responding to a letter from the church at Corinth. They apparently wrote him a letter after the year and a half that he spent with them to gain clarification on a number of issues. The current issue to be addressed is mixed marriages (Christian with non Christian).
- When Paul says that it is good for a man not to touch a woman, he is not overturning God's intentions in the garden when He created Adam and Eve and declared that their relationship was good. But Paul's instruction must be received in context. Verses 26-31 really clarifies that this instruction is given at a time when there is tremendous persecution of Christians under the jurisdiction of the Romans.
- Despite the current distress, Paul teaches that if they are not able to control themselves they should get married. Once married, self control is manifest by a healthy sexual relationship. Men and women are to give themselves to each other and they do this as husbands and wives. This means that although they may do this differently because of the different orientations, but nonetheless, they honor each other by giving themselves and ruling over each others bodies.

<sup>5</sup> *Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.<sup>6</sup> But I say this as a concession, not as a commandment.<sup>7</sup> For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that.<sup>8</sup> But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am;<sup>9</sup> but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.*

- Paul teaches that abstinence for married people is permitted but only for some period of time for the purpose of devoting themselves to prayer and fasting. Note this is given as a concession and not a command. There is no indication that abstinence is a virtue. If there is no sexual activity in a marriage then there is no protection in the marriage.
- Paul then addresses those who are not married and teaches that in light of the persecution it is better for them to stay single. But it would be better to have to endure the hardship of being married during the persecution than it would be to commit sexual immorality. Paul has a very high view of God's righteousness.

<sup>10</sup> *Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband.<sup>11</sup> But even if she does depart, let*

*her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife.<sup>12</sup> But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her.<sup>13</sup> And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him.<sup>14</sup> For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.<sup>15</sup> But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace.<sup>16</sup> For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?*

- The Apostle moves on to give his instruction to the married which is really a restatement of the teaching of Christ. This is why he states that the teaching is not his own. He begins with the imperative that there is to be no divorce. This is the general rule that should shape the way we think—divorce is not an option; it is not a way to solve or improve anything. If a spouse has already departed, then the departed spouse should stay unmarried or reconcile with the other spouse.
- When Paul states that the next teaching is from him and not the Lord he is not stating this so that we can disregard the teaching. His point is that Christ did not teach in mixed marriages (Christians with non-Christians) and so therefore he is not able to simply restate Christ's teaching but as an Apostle, he gives the inspired teaching himself.
- Through Paul, God brought many Corinthians into His kingdom. Their lives were changed and they began to live new lives. But still, many of them were married to spouses who did not believe and there arose a concern over whether the Christians should continue in that relationship. Paul's answer is clearly yes. If the Christian has a spouse that is willing to live with them, they should not instigate a divorce simply because the spouse is not a believer.
- In addition, the Christians were to continue with the proper sexual relationship with their spouses even though the spouse may be an unbeliever. Because of the Christian in the marriage covenant, God sees the entire family as holy (although not necessarily saved) and there is no defilement when the Christian spouse is rendering themselves unto their non-Christian spouse.
- If the unbeliever does not want to continue the marriage, the Christian spouse is not to be contentious. The proper response for the deserted spouse would be prayer not fighting. This is why Paul states that we are called to live in peace not in turmoil. But note, nowhere in here is there a permission to divorce.
- Much debate has occurred over the condition of the deserted believer as to whether they can remarry or whether the marriage still exists. As he taught earlier, it would be better if the couple were reconciled or the deserter stay unmarried but to the deserted, he states that they are not "under bondage". The question remains, does this bondage apply to a marriage covenant? The Greek word Paul uses is douloo (Strong's 1402) which is a noun (bondage) usually describing one who is bound to something. This word comes from the Greek word doulos (Strong's 1401) which is an adjective (bound) and this word comes from the Greek word deo (Strong's 1210) which is a verb (to bind). All three of these words are related to each and the first two represent different forms of the same root word deo. Later in this chapter, in verse 27, Paul uses the adjective doulos to describe being married. In Romans 7:2 again Paul uses doulos to describe being under a marriage covenant. In our current verse, Paul states that if the unbelieving spouse leaves and divorces their believing spouse, the believing spouse is no longer bound (under bondage) to the marriage covenant and is therefore (by implication) free to remarry (despite the distress; see verse 28).

*<sup>17</sup> But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches.<sup>18</sup> Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised.<sup>19</sup> Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.<sup>20</sup> Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called.<sup>21</sup> Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it.<sup>22</sup> For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave.<sup>23</sup> You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.<sup>24</sup> Brethren, let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called. NKJV*

- Again Paul demonstrates his high view of God's standards by stating that the real important thing is obeying the commandments of God. The point he makes in this section is that whether you were married or you were a slave or whether you were free, God called you right where you were. Don't try to get out of those situations unless God has permitted you to. It would be better to stay in that situation than it would be to sin by trying to extricate yourself from it.