

1 Corinthians

Chapter 7:25-40

April 28, 1996

- **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 7:25-40**

- **Introduction & Review**

In the prior section of this chapter Paul has begun to give his answer to the questions posed to him by the Corinthian church. His first response was to clarify for them that it was good to get married and that it was also good to stay single. But given the current distress mentioned in this upcoming section, Paul reiterated that it would be better for them to stay single because of the additional trials that could be inflicted upon someone who had the additional cares of a family.

- **Exposition**

1 Corinthians 7:25-40

²⁵ *Now concerning virgins: I have no commandment from the Lord; yet I give judgment as one whom the Lord in His mercy has made trustworthy.*²⁶ *I suppose therefore that this is good because of the present distress-that it is good for a man to remain as he is.*²⁷ *Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife.*²⁸ *But even if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Nevertheless such will have trouble in the flesh, but I would spare you.*²⁹

- Again, Paul stresses the importance of remaining in the situations they were currently in-because of the present distress. This is not a section suggesting that it is wrong to change our situations in general, but here this specific application, in light of their predicament, Paul suggests that now is not the time to be make life more complicated.
- The reason Paul has no commandment from the Lord is because Christ did not teach on the topic at hand. Although Christ did teach on a myriad of topics, His teaching was not exhaustive. If it were, there would have been no need for further revelation like 1 Corinthians or Romans etc. But note that Paul establishes his authority as one whom the mercy of God has made trustworthy. Because of his Apostolic authority and the fact that God has seen fit to include this writing in the canon, we accept Paul's commands as scripture with equal authority.
- It is feasible to understand the instruction on virginity as pertaining to both unmarried male and female because he begins the section addressing unmarried men and then moves on to teach on unmarried women. But he specifically refers to the women by the name virgins.
- When considering the present distress, Paul thought it better to remain as each man was. If they were currently married, Paul says stay married and don't seek a divorce (seek to be loosed). If they were currently loosed, (either lawfully (not necessarily legally) divorced or widowed) they should not seek to be bound again because the marriage would add additional distractions that would make a persecution all the more difficult.
- Paul goes out of his way to ensure that his teaching is balanced. For fear that they might think that he is saying that being unmarried is more godly of a position, in all circumstances, he points out that whether some of them were lawfully divorced or whether they were widows or whether they were never married, it is not a sinful thing that they should remarry. But his instruction is given out of concern for them because he cares that they would be spared from additional hardship.

*But this I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none,*³⁰ *those*

who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess,³¹ and those who use this world as not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away.

- Although, these verses appear difficult to understand, the basic instruction is this. Paul's main concern is that they not allow the things of life to distract them from the service to God. If you have not been given the gift of celibacy (and you are unable to control your desires) you should marry-not being married would be a distraction. If you are currently married, don't allow yourselves to forget the duty to the Lord because you are distracted by domestic issues. If you are in current affliction, don't let your circumstances knock you off course. If you are currently in the midst of tremendous blessing or are able to acquire many things, don't let those things distract you either.

³² But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord-how he may please the Lord.³³ But he who is married cares about the things of the world-how he may please his wife.³⁴ There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world-how she may please her husband.³⁵ And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction.

- He brings out an obvious point about marriage-a married person has greater responsibilities than if he/she were unmarried. But he does not teach that marriage is a bad thing or that thinking about your spouse is a bad thing. He simply is telling them that there are greater distractions when you are married and are facing devastating persecution.
- Notice again Paul's balance. He is not giving them a rule that is to bind them for all situations. However, considering the situation at hand, his entire purpose is to give them wisdom for dealing with their distress.

³⁶ But if any man thinks he is behaving improperly toward his virgin, if she is past the flower of youth, and thus it must be, let him do what he wishes. He does not sin; let them marry.³⁷ Nevertheless he who stands steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but has power over his own will, and has so determined in his heart that he will keep his virgin, does well.³⁸ So then he who gives her in marriage does well, but he who does not give her in marriage does better.³⁹ A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.⁴⁰ But she is happier if she remains as she is, according to my judgment-and I think I also have the Spirit of God. NKJV

- There are at least two or perhaps three way to understand these verses. The differences in understanding can be found in the difference between the NKJV and the NIV translations. It all boils down to the understanding of one word (any man vs. 36). Some have translated that the man is engaged to this woman and others have translated that the man is the virgin's father. In either case, I think that the instruction applies somewhat awkwardly:

If the man was betrothed but not yet fully married, Paul's instruction is to marry rather than stay perpetually engaged. But later he says that he who stays perpetually engaged does well.

If the man is the woman's father the instruction is for him to let her marry despite the teaching that he just gave in the previous verses regarding the additional concerns that a married woman has. However, he gives this instruction with the caveat that the father not be under compulsion, that is, he is able to control himself.

The final option is that Paul is addressing a practice called the *virgines subintroductae* which was a relationship between a man and a woman where they would travel together, sleep together (but always remaining celibate) for the purpose of rendering service to one another. This was a rather common practice in Paul's day yet it was ultimately condemned by the Fathers and Councils of the 3rd and 4th centuries.