

1 Corinthians 7

The next problem at Corinth: Extremes on marriage, and remaining single VS. getting married

1 Corinthians 7.1-7

V1 – A reference to what? A previous letter (not inspired)

-**The ideal state?** No marriage – lives totally devoted to Christ

-See v 26 – because of the present distress (notice carefully)

Details of the "present distress":

-The Romans conquered Jerusalem in 63 BC

-They destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD

-In that year, the Roman government ordered the complete destruction of Jerusalem (under General Titus) – 600,000 Jews were slain

-One historian has said, "Jerusalem had no history for the next 200 years after its destruction"

-Only one wall of the old temple was left standing

-It is now called the "Wailing Wall" – wailing for the destruction of Jerusalem

-Also, there was general world-wide persecution of Jews and Christians (See *Matt. 24.1-35*)

V2 – Does Paul require celibacy? No!

-See *1 Tim. 4.1-3* – a sign of the last days

-**Why should we be married?** Because of the flesh

-Remember the situation in the city of Corinth – a very rough place with many temptations

V3 – Do we have the right to withhold relations from our spouse? No

-Notice the equality of the sexes in sexual matters

V4 – When we marry, we give up our bodies to our mates! Our bodies no longer belong to us.

V5 – One exception for abstinence? A season of prayer

-**Why should we resume relations shortly?** Because Satan will tempt us again

Note: Some have taken this "season of prayer" to justify priests, monks, nuns, etc., not marrying

-In marriage, sex is not to be used as a weapon in a family argument

-v 5 – "*by agreement*"; we cannot withhold sex at will, only with agreement, and only for a short time

V6 – This goes with v 7 (his opinion is coming in v 7)

V7 – Paul had great self-control

-*1 Cor. 9.27* – He had to buffet his body daily to keep it under control

-Paul had the ability to remain unmarried (or as a widower) without sinning

1 Corinthians 7.8-16

V8 – For the unmarried and the widows: Because of the present distress, it was better not to marry

V 9 – **Exception?** Those without self-control

-**Why?** It is better to marry than to burn – See *Gal. 5.19-21, Rev. 21.8*

-Two interpretations:

1. That it is better to marry than to burn in hell due to the temptations of the flesh
2. That it is better to marry than to burn with desire for sexual fulfillment

V 10 – We were meant to live with our legal mates

-**Did Paul recommend legal separations?** No

-**Did he reluctantly allow them?** Yes (*v 11*)

V 11 – **In separations, what are the two choices?**

1. Remain celibate
2. Be reconciled to one's husband or wife

-*1 Tim. 5.8* – We are to provide for our household, or we are worse than an infidel

V 12 – "I say, not the Lord" – It means this material was not presented by Jesus, but was inspired just the same

V 12-13 – **Can a Christian and a non-Christian remain married?** Yes

V 14 – **Why does God recognize that marriage?** Because, otherwise, the children would be illegitimate

-This marriage is legal and binding in the eyes of God

V 15 – They can become separated (but not to marry someone else)

-*"not under bondage"* – This is not referring to marriage as bondage, but Paul is saying that the wife is not a slave to a husband who deserts her

-She does not have to try to find him and try to be a good wife to him again

-In other words, she is not in servitude to him – the Bible here again allows a legal separation

-**But notice that Paul does not mention a second marriage!** Otherwise Paul would be contradicting Jesus in *Matt. 19.9*, which only gives one reason for a divorce and a second marriage: adultery, and then only the innocent person can remarry

-Paul is saying that the wife is not a slave – they can get a legal separation and live celibate lives apart from each other

V 16 – **The advantage of living with a non-Christian?** That non-Christian might be converted through the influence of the Christian mate

-See *1 Peter 3.1-6* – a Christian wife may win her husband to the Lord

1 Corinthians 7.17-21

General principle: Because of the present persecution, don't worry about trying to change your position in life, until things settle down

-We might say today, "The world is passing away, so don't worry about trying to get that promotion, or a new car, or a new TV"

V 18-21 – **Circumcision? Being a slave?** Don't spend time trying to change your status (wait for better times)

-But does this apply to our marriage situation? No – this is not an excuse to divorce for a reason other than what we find in *Matt. 19.9*

1 Corinthians 7.22-31

V 25 – Paul's opinion as one who can be trusted

-Advice to the unmarried

V 26-27 – **Considering the "present distress," what is Paul's advice?**

-If single, stay single – if married, stay married

-Why would it be harder to endure persecution in the married state? Because the two mates would be concerned about each other and the children and would be trying to find one other, in case they were separated by war, famine, etc.

V 28 – This refers back to v 8-9 – a catastrophe was coming in 70 A.D.

V 29-31 – We are not to be concerned about physical things

-The persecution would take away all their earthly possessions

1 Corinthians 7.32-38

V 32 – **The advantages of being single?** More concentration on the church and spreading the gospel

V 33 – **What happens to married people?** They have many other concerns

V 35 – Again we have Paul's opinion

V 36 – Notice that the New American Standard Translation puts the word "daughter" in italics, because that word is not found in the best texts that we have today

-So we can take that word out, and the passage begins to make sense

-According to v 36, if they want to get married, in spite of the "present distress," that would not be a sin – they should get married

V 37 – And if they try to stay together during the time of distress, that is fine also

V 38 – The decision is up to the two people involved (whether to get married or stay single, until things settle down)

1 Corinthians 7.39-40

V 39-40 – **What are the instructions to widows?** If a Christian widow chooses to remarry, she is restricted to marrying a Christian man

-Why would the Lord put this restriction on Christian widows? Because they are in a very vulnerable situation

-There are all kinds of con artists and evil people who have no problem at all in taking advantage of older widows

-Read James 1.27 – Why did James put widows and orphans in the same category?

Why do we have all kinds of passages in the Old Testament and New Testament

(example: 1 Tim. 5) that mention the special treatment for widows? Because they are so vulnerable

-Therefore, they can only remarry "*in the Lord*"

-Some people argue over the meaning of this expression, but they should be asked, "What is the meaning of 'out of the Lord'?"

-We know the exact meaning of "out of the Lord," and we therefore ought to know the meaning of the opposite of that expression: If she chooses to remarry, it must be to a Christian man – a man "in the Lord"

It is sad that sometimes this passage is never preached on at some congregations, and as a result there are Christian widows who remarry non-Christian men, only later to find this Scripture, and they are upset that they never knew about it before

-Twice at this writer's congregation, we have had women moved here in this situation: It was never preached on where they used to attend, and they became widows and were remarried to non-Christian men

-In both cases, they were shown this passage and understood it immediately – they saw the message of Paul on this subject

-It is shameful that it is seldom preached on at many congregations

Revised 2013-01-22