

First Corinthians 7

Introduction:

1. The Corinthians wrote Paul concerning several marriage matters, and his answers to them comprise this seventh chapter.
2. Consider these saints with pagan and Jewish backgrounds living in a city comparable to our San Francisco or Las Vegas.
3. They would have had many questions about sex, marriage, divorce, mixed marriages, virgins, widows, discipleship, etc.
4. One-fourth of our covenant for 2004 involves maximizing our relationships, and marriage is an important one (I Pet 3:7).
5. Our beloved brother Paul just spent two chapters dealing with fornication, relevant instruction for a church at Corinth.

Outline of Chapter 7:

1. Rules concerning marital sex (1-5)
2. Rules concerning the single life (6-9)
3. Rules concerning divorce (10-16)
4. Rules concerning natural callings (17-24)
5. Rules concerning emancipated virgins (25-35)
6. Rules concerning virgins yet at home (36-38)
7. Rules concerning widows (39-40).

7:1 Paul began addressing marital questions raised by the church by recommending against it.

- A. It is obvious that he is introducing a new section to his epistle to deal with marital questions.
- B. "Touching a woman" in this place has little to do with physical contact, but rather marriage.
 1. It is as if Paul had said, in our speech, "Don't even touch them," or, "Stay away from them," where we would clearly understand that he simply meant avoid marriage.
 2. If he meant simple touching and the potential lust, the next verse would begin with "and."
 3. If he meant simple touch and the potential sin, the next verse would start, "because."
 4. Nevertheless indicates that verse one is the opposite of verse two's instruction to marry.
 5. Verse one is saying the very thing that Paul will shortly repeat in verses seven and eight.
- C. A sure solution for marital problems, and carrying several benefits, is to avoid it altogether.
- D. Paul is not far from Solomon, who described the horrible pain of women (Eccl 7:26-29).
- E. Every young person craving marriage should think soberly about the new problems it creates.
- F. Marriage is definitely very good; for we have Scripture declaring that it is, even when Adam had not sinned and walked with God (Gen 2:18; Ruth 3:1; Prov 18:22; 19:14; Eccl 4:9-12).
- G. However, marriage brings another set of problems that can greatly complicate a man's life.
 1. It is difficult to live with another sinner intimately (Gen 30:1; Ex 21:10; II Sam 6:20-23; Ruth 4:6; Prov 12:4; 30:21-23; Eccl 7:26-29; Matt 19:10-11; Col 3:19; I Pet 3:7).
 2. It is a distraction from serving the Lord as fully as without a spouse (7:32; Matt 19:12).
 3. It is a burden in times of persecution, especially for men (7:26; Luke 21:23; 23:28-29).
- H. It should not be difficult to imagine a number of their questions indicated by Paul's answers.
 1. Seeing Paul's single and successful life, the zealous ones would want to emulate him.
 2. Having lived fornicating lives before (6:9-11), they would have questions about sex.
 3. Living in a city with loose morals and divorce laws, they would think lightly of marriage.

7:2 The sexual drive in both sexes requires both men and women to marry to avoid fornication.

- A. After puberty, there is a strong hormonal drive for sexual curiosity, expression, and pleasure.
- B. The Lord recognizes this drive is difficult or impossible to control without marriage (7:9).
- C. The Lord Jesus Christ created the sexual drive in both sexes, and it is both good and holy.
- D. Though he will recommend against marriage for several reasons, sex demands it for most.

- 7:3 **Marriage involves strong sexual duties or the important purpose of marriage is violated.**
- A. Paul used a euphemism to say sex when, where, how, and how often your spouse wants it.
 - B. **Benevolence.** Favourable feeling or disposition, kindness, generosity, as an emotion manifested towards another; affection; goodwill.
 - C. **Due.** Owing or payable, as an enforceable obligation or debt.
 - D. **Due benevolence?** Kindly and generously, with affectionate goodwill, giving your spouse all the sex they want in the way they want it, which is an obligation and debt of marriage.
 - E. Paul, ever inspired by the Holy Spirit, stated the man's duties toward his wife first. Hear him!
 - F. A spouse should never have to ask or suggest, for the debt already exists by order of heaven!
 - G. Since the sexes are different, this requires each spouse to reject their respective ideas of sex.
 - H. A spouse should not have to tell you; but if you are still ignorant, you should humbly ask.
- 7:4 **The sexual duties of marriage are such that neither spouse has the right to ever refuse sex.**
- A. Open-heart surgery and a severe case of the flu are obvious exceptions to be ignored, for the only people that ever raise the exceptions are those with rebellious defrauding in their hearts.
 - B. **Power.** Possession of control or command; rule, control, influence, authority, or right.
 - C. The wife does not possess the control or command of her body; she does not have the rule, control, or influence of it; she does not have the authority or right to reject her husband.
 - D. But the husband does possess the control or command of her body; he does have the rule, control, or influence of it; he does have authority or right to use it when and how he pleases.
 - E. The same rule applies to husbands; they do not have the authority or right to refuse sex; and their wives have the authority and right to their bodies for sex when and how they desire it.
 - F. A wife does not have the right, let alone an excusable reason, to deprive her husband of sex.
 - G. Woman! You have no right to determine when, where, or how your husband wants your sex.
 - H. Man! You have no right to determine when, where, or how your wife wants your sex.
 - I. Since the sexes are quite different, this requires the sacrificial spirit of a loving servant to learn the other spouse's preferences and seek to fulfill them as fully as possible.
 - J. A spouse should not have to tell you; but if you are still ignorant, you should humbly ask.
 - K. Much more can be said and has been said. Consult the outlines for couples and the husbands.
- 7:5 **Frequent sex should only be interrupted for fasting and prayer, or it is ungodly defrauding.**
- A. **Defraud.** To deprive (a person) by fraud of what is his by right, either by fraudulently taking or by dishonestly withholding it from him; to cheat, cozen, beguile.
 - B. Let every prudish and selfish wife understand the word also describes adultery (I Thess 4:6).
 - C. Because sex that fulfills and satisfies your spouse is your obligation, not giving sex is fraud.
 - D. Interruption of frequent and regular sex must be (1) by consent, (2) for a short time, (3) for holy reasons, and (4) have a definite end.
 - E. There is a very real danger of temptation to fornication by Satan, if you reject God's remedy.
 - F. **Incontinence.** Want of continence or self-restraint; inability to contain or retain.
 - G. The inability to contain or restrain yourself sexually will be used by the devil, but God gave a remedy for that burning drive and need toward fornication – a happy marriage!
- 7:6 **Paul's rules for marriage and the sexual union were by permission, not commandment.**
- A. The difficulty here, if any, is identifying the antecedent for the demonstrative pronoun "this."
 - B. Given what began (7:1) and follows (7:7), we conclude he means marriage in general (7:2-5).
 - C. This verse does not teach Paul sometimes merely gave his personal opinion in his epistles.
 - D. God did not give Paul permission to express his own personal opinion; but rather, Paul gave God's rules for sex in marriage, which itself was a matter of personal choice, not command.
 - E. The Corinthians did not have to marry, but it was permitted. He suggested against it (7:1,7).

- F. Realizing most men, and women cannot handle his first recommendation (7:1), he gave them inspired permission to marry as they saw fit, though it was not commanded and carried rules.
- G. Paul is saying, What I have just said about marriage is permissible, but not required.

7:7 Paul recommended that as many of them as possible use the single life to be like him.

- A. Paul was single and avoided the cares and difficulties of marriage to serve Christ (I Cor 9:5).
- B. There is no doubt marriage brings many problems, which the apostles knew (Matt 19:10-11).
- C. There would be no doubt the churches had been stronger with more men like Paul, but most men are not like Paul, in being able to keep his body under without a wife.
- D. Paul had a special gift Jesus had identified, being a eunuch for the kingdom (Matthew 19:12).
- E. It is a simple fact of Scripture and nature that most men desperately need a wife to function.
- F. However, marriage brings another set of problems that can greatly complicate a man's life.
 - 1. It is difficult to live with another sinner intimately (Gen 30:1; Ex 21:10; II Sam 6:20-23; Ruth 4:6; Prov 12:4; 30:21-23; Eccl 7:26-29; Matt 19:10-11; Col 3:19; I Pet 3:7).
 - 2. It is a distraction from serving the Lord as fully as without a spouse (7:32; Matt 19:12).
 - 3. It is a burden in times of persecution, especially for men (7:26; Luke 21:23; 23:28-29).

7:8 Paul concisely addresses the unmarried and widows by recommending against marriage.

- A. To those in a single state – virgins, divorced, or widows – Paul recommended staying single.
- B. If a person can handle the sexual temptation, it is a good thing to be dedicated to Jesus Christ.
- C. Consider dear Anna. Knowing the joy of marriage, she rejected it for God (Luke 2:36-37).

7:9 A person's sex drive is the determining factor in choosing the single life or marriage.

- A. If a person is contemplating the life of Anna or Paul, they must measure their sexual needs.
- B. If they are sorely tempted, or if they would be tempted, then they need to get married instead.
- C. It is better to forgo the superior spiritual life, if you will be burning in sexual desire for love.
- D. Burning here is the aching loins of a young man and the craving heart of a young woman.

7:10 Paul followed Jesus Christ in telling those married to believers that marriage is for life.

- A. Having concluded his rules on sex and the single life, he takes up those already married.
- B. These words do not allow for personal choice as 7:6, but they are a command from God.
- C. Paul did not originate this rule of marriage, for the Lord Jesus Christ had taught it already against the Pharisees (Matt 5:31-32; 19:1-9; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18).
- D. Jesus taught, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt 19:6).
- E. Marriage is a permanent relationship, and that is where we start in order to follow Christ.
- F. In those harsher times, Paul used the case of a woman leaving and divorcing her husband.
 - 1. A woman in a difficult marriage might look on Paul's single life as a better alternative.
 - 2. Corinth, the lascivious and pagan place it was, would have allowed easy divorce freedom.
 - 3. The Jews, of which this church had some, had also greatly loosened marriage (Mat 19:3).
 - 4. This woman does not merely leave for a weekend to "get away from it all," for the context is clearly divorce, and she is described in the next verse as being *unmarried*.
- G. The Lord Jesus, preaching to the nation of Israel, addressed only marriages of two believers.
 - 1. He dealt with marriage in the church of God, for the Jews were to marry other believers.
 - 2. We see this difference by Paul alone addressing those married to unbelievers (7:12-13).
 - 3. The sense of these verses (7:10-13) does not teach Paul sometimes went against the Lord!
- H. Paul and Jesus taught the same thing – believers should not break their marriage covenants.
 - 1. Marriage is a lifelong commitment of partnership, only broken for very serious offences.
 - 2. Jesus gave one exception in His teaching – fornication, any sexual sin (Matt 5:32; 19:9).
 - 3. Consideration of other exceptions beyond fornication is outside the realm of this study.

4. This verse does not allow for her separating or divorcing and remaining unmarried: this verse condemns the separating and divorcing. She is bound to her lifelong commitment.
5. Separating from a husband because a woman “needs some space” is a sin against this text and its corollaries. Such a woman is a defrauder (7:5) and covenantbreaker (Rom 1:31).

7:11 **If a woman went ahead and divorced anyway, she should not remarry, so she can reconcile.**

- A. The first sin was stated in the previous verse, separating from and divorcing her husband.
- B. Leaving a husband unlawfully is defrauding (7:5) and covenantbreaking (Rom 1:31) at least.
- C. If she were foolish enough to commit the first, Paul warns her against the irrevocable second.
- D. If she were foolish enough to commit the first, Paul warns her she must be single forever.
- E. Once a woman marries another man, she commits an act of adultery (Matthew 5:32; 19:9).
- F. Once a woman marries another man, she cannot return in any way to the first (Deut 24:1-4).
- G. It is this second consequence of remarriage that is primarily under consideration by the verse.
- H. The same rule of divorce covers men, yet a man could retake his first wife, when she was taken from him against his will (II Sam 3:13-16; I Sam 25:44).

7:12 **Paul took up the subject of mixed marriages and commanded the men to remain married.**

- A. The “rest” Paul refers to are of the married (7:10), but these were married to unbelievers.
- B. Jesus had not dealt with this subject before, so Paul addressed it without the Lord’s lead.
- C. This sense of this verse in light of 7:10 does not teach Paul sometimes went against the Lord!
- D. The covenant of marriage was still binding, if a man’s unbelieving wife still wanted him.
- E. The religion difference, even with some difficulties, did not sufficiently corrupt the marriage.
- F. All such matters are submitted to the holy will and providence of God, who knows all things from creation, and has never given any man a temptation he cannot bear (I Cor 10:13).

7:13 **Paul dealt further with mixed marriages and commanded the women to remain married.**

- A. If a pagan husband was willing to keep the marriage, the believing wife was to stay married.
- B. Conversion was not sufficient grounds, based on God’s providence, to break up a marriage.
- C. The exceptional case of national divorce in Israel was for Jews marrying pagans unlawfully.

7:14 **A believing spouse in a mixed marriage brings a sanctifying effect on spouse and children.**

- A. Here is a practical, not a spiritual, reason for keeping mixed marriages together, if possible.
- B. These saints surely knew marriages to pagans were forbidden, but what if it was too late?
- C. Should they end the marriage in order to be like Paul or start over with a believing spouse?
- D. The sanctification here cannot be saving holiness, but rather practical approval from God.
- E. Any saving influence or effect cannot be intended here, for that is waiting ahead (7:16).
- F. Meats, even O.T. unclean meats, are sanctified – or approved – by God (I Timothy 4:1-5).
- G. The superiority of monogamy, by obeying God’s rule, leads to an approved seed (Mal 2:15).
- H. The Medes and Persians were called God’s sanctified ones – approved for success (Is 13:3).
- I. The believer brings God’s sanctifying approval upon the unbeliever for a legitimate union, which is acceptable in the sight of God and proper to maintain before the world.
- J. The Lord accepts and approves the unbelieving spouse by the presence of the believer, though a believer should never marry an unbeliever intentionally (7:39; 9:5; 11:11).
- K. The presence of the unbeliever does not pollute the marriage; rather the believer sanctifies it.
- L. The context is legitimacy of marriage with an unbeliever; keeping the marriage covers all.
- M. If marriages were broken for conversion of one, the children would be counted illegitimate.
- N. The believer brings sanctifying approval from God upon the offspring of the relationship.
- O. Unclean and holy should not be understood beyond legitimate children before God and men.
- P. There is nothing in this text, when compared with the scriptures, to teach infant baptism.

- 7:15 **A believing spouse is freed from marital obligations, if the unbeliever departs from them.**
- A. Jesus gave the exception for active divorce (Matt 5:32; 19:9), Paul here for passive divorce.
 - B. If an unbeliever divorces a believer, the believer should let the unbeliever end the marriage.
 - 1. The unbeliever is no longer pleased to dwell with the believer for any reason (7:12-13).
 - 2. The believer is to let them divorce – they are under no rule to preserve the marriage.
 - 3. Mixed marriages are not good things, and God ends them with an unbeliever divorcing.
 - C. A believer is not under bondage to remain unmarried if an unbeliever leaves (7:10-11,27-28).
 - 1. The use of bondage here is not some manmade idea of chasing the unbelieving spouse, for that was already dealt with in the first sentence by the words, “let them go.”
 - 2. The first two clauses are not repeating the same thing – the first clause is answering 7:12-14; and the second clause about being freed is answering 7:11. This is as clear as can be!
 - 3. The bondage of staying unmarried, though divorced, was stated in the parallel text; and it is this issue of remarriage that is at stake ... or it is not dealt with at all! God forbid!
 - 4. The marriage bond has been broken by the unbeliever, which frees them from it by God.
 - 5. It is amazing to see some understand “bound” and “loosed” in Romans 7:2 and “bound” and “liberty” in I Cor 7:39, but they willfully refuse to use that sense right here!
 - 6. It is a very unmerciful thought of Pharisaism that a believer would have to remain single.
 - 7. Paul has ruled by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost that believers are free to remarry.
 - D. This liberty from marriage is not to be sought by the believer; they should promote marriage.
 - 1. It would be wrong for a believer to aggravate the unbeliever to cause them to depart.
 - 2. It has been my pleasure to see extreme efforts made to please unbelieving spouses.
 - 3. When the unbelieving spouse still leaves, a free and pure conscience before God is good.
 - 4. Paul’s use of “but,” a disjunctive, indicates that this clause opposes what has gone before.
 - 5. If Paul had used “for,” it might mean not chasing after the deserting spouse (redundantly repeating the first clause), but the disjunctive “but” requires opposition to both clauses.
 - 6. Furthermore, the following verse, connected by “for” to this “but clause,” indicates a further reason to stay married with an unbeliever – in order to convert them to the gospel!
 - E. A child of God with the mind of Christ and knowing the Scriptures can easily grasp this.

- 7:16 **A reason to remain married to an unbeliever is the possibility of their future conversion.**
- A. Our brother Peter teaches this as a real possibility and goal for believing women (I Pet 3:1-6).
 - B. Here is another reason, in addition to a call to peace, to remain with an unbeliever (7:13-15).
 - C. The salvation here cannot be eternal, legal, vital, or final; it must be practical (I Tim 4:16).

- 7:17 **The situational position of any man should not be altered by his conversion to the gospel.**
- A. Paul began the fourth lesson in the chapter – contentment with your life situation (17-24).
 - B. With due respect, it seems to be a rabbit trail introduced by the situations of mixed marriages.
 - C. Having just dealt with mixed marriages by God’s providential timing, he expanded the point.
 - D. Here is a practical application of the sovereignty of God – trusting His timing in your life.
 - E. God gives abilities, opportunities, or marital status, and no one should revolt against them, nor should their new religion be looked at as a reason to greatly alter these ordinary things.
 - F. Your situation in life with all the factors of poverty, education, profession, family, location, experiences, knowledge, wealth, and so forth are distributed by the just providence of God.
 - G. The timing of conversion – the call of God here – is with God’s knowledge of all situations, and the converted Christian should learn to serve and worship Christ in his existing situation.
 - H. Of course, this has nothing to do with sinful practices, but those indifferent matters of liberty.
 - I. A man’s life should not be turned upside down because he has been converted to the gospel.
 - J. The saints of God are not to be conformed to this world, but they yet live in the world (5:10).

- K. This instruction of Paul was an ordinance of the gospel applicable to all the churches of God.
- L. For there were and have been temptations to monastic type alterations of life for the gospel.
- M. The cult mentality of total worldly separation in a compound is given a deathblow right here.

- 7:18 **The relationship to Jewish tradition did not have to be turned upside down for the gospel.**
- A. History records Jews surgically reversing circumcision to please the Greeks at nude games, especially under Antiochus Epiphanes, to please him and repudiate Judaism (I Mac 1:15).
 - B. Consider a Gentile proselyte of the Jewish religion converted to the gospel and learning there was no need for him to have been circumcised: he might well seek to reverse the stigma.
 - C. Consider on the other hand new Gentile converts fearing the intimidation of the Judaizers.
 - D. However, Paul's use of circumcision applies as well to the whole Jewish tradition and rites.
 - E. Jews or Gentiles had no need to alter tradition; it did not matter (Ga 2:11-13; 3:28; 5:6; 6:15).
 - F. Paul circumcised Timothy for the gospel; he did not Titus for the gospel (Ac 16:1-3; Ga 2:3).
- 7:19 **Whether a man was circumcised or not had nothing to do with pleasing Jesus Christ.**
- A. Circumcision in the flesh proved nothing, unless the heart was circumcised (Romans 2:28).
 - B. Uncircumcision in the flesh proved nothing, unless the heart was circumcised (Romans 2:29).
 - C. The issue of circumcision was a hot one for Paul and the others to combat (Acts 15:1-31).
 - D. Circumcision has no spiritual value whatsoever in the New Testament (Gal 3:28; 5:6; 6:15).
 - G. Paul circumcised Timothy for the gospel; he did not Titus for the gospel (Ac 16:1-3; Ga 2:3).
 - H. The measure of acceptance with God from a practical aspect is keeping His commandments.
 - I. If circumcision was replaced by infant sprinkling, as Rome and her harlot daughters teach; Paul had many opportunities to present such a change; but he did not, so we reject the heresy.
- 7:20 **Paul repeated his exhortation for men to remain in the calling in which they were called.**
- A. So far, Paul has covered being called with an unconverted spouse and relationship to the law.
 - B. Whatever calling, or station in life, a man had, his conversion did not alter or disrupt it at all.
 - C. Here are two callings – your life's vocation or situation and your conversion by the gospel.
 - D. Due to drastic differences between Christianity and paganism, there was temptation to revolt.
 - E. While we are sons of God awaiting heaven, until we are there we are to live contentedly here.
- 7:21 **Servants did not need to worry about their economic or professional status in Jesus Christ.**
- A. If a man were converted while a servant of a pagan Corinthian, he should not worry about it.
 - B. It would be hard for a child of the king to be content as the servant of a pagan Corinthian.
 - C. If a man were converted while a servant and could become free, it would serve Christ better.
- 7:22 **A man's relationship with Jesus so exceeds all earthly relations as to render them harmless.**
- A. If a man is converted as a servant of men, he should see himself clearly as Christ's freeman.
 - B. If a man is converted as free from men, he should see himself clearly as Christ's servant.
 - C. Due to our greater relationship in Jesus Christ, the lesser relationships with men do not count.
- 7:23 **By virtue of Christ having purchased His church, relations with men should not bind them.**
- A. Paul had taught earlier that Jesus Christ had purchased the saints, even their bodies (6:13-20).
 - B. Men of this world, no matter what claims or acts, should not create soul bondage over a saint.
 - C. This verse is clearly not contradicting what he just taught – being a servant of men is fine.
 - D. Paul is correcting any soul bondage that might exist, for they were soul free in Christ Jesus.
 - E. And Paul further corrected any temptation to compromise with ungodly requests by masters.

7:24 **The gospel should not disrupt a man's life in its situational position; let him walk with God.**

- A. This verse or its companions can never be used to justify sinful living due to previous habits.
- B. Peter describes true conversion as no longer running to the excesses of others (I Pet 4:1-5).
- C. True conversion breaks your life violently to press into the kingdom (Mat 11:12; Luk 16:16).
- D. When the gospel is preached, lives are changed (Luke 19:1-10; Act 19:18-20; I Thes 1:9-10).
- E. These verses (17-24) undo any false notions that conversion justified revolt against status.
- F. The cult mentality of total worldly separation in a compound is given a deathblow right here.

7:25 **Returning to his previous commendation of the single state, Paul expanded reasons for it.**

- A. Here is his fifth lesson, where he dealt with virgins and singles not living at home (25-35).
- B. To the chapter end he deals with single members he listed earlier (7:8); there are three classes of them – singles not under a father (25-35), virgins at home (36-38), and widows (39-40).
- C. He identified the members he addressed as virgins, those unmarried and living the single life.
- D. Paul had no command from Christ, as earlier stated (7:6), but he had inspired suggestions!
- E. From Paul's vantage point, he encouraged the church to receive his wise and sage counsel.
- F. From our vantage point, we understand that God inspired faithful Paul to write holy scripture.
- G. Paul's judgment is only to be understood short of a commandment in this matter of liberty, for he was surely and truly inspired, as his further explication of the case teaches (7:40).

7:26 **Single men should not be worried or desirous of getting a wife in difficult times at Corinth.**

- A. There were natural reasons, not holy commands from God, for such men to remain single.
- B. The choice of marriage was still every man's choice, but Paul showed the pros and cons.
- C. While we know little about persecution at Corinth, it was quite common in the early church.
 - 1. Reading about Paul's time at Corinth indicates violent Jews and Greeks (Acts 18:12-18).
 - 2. Paul alludes to the suffering of the Corinthians in his second epistle to them (II Co 1:6-7).
 - 3. The history of the New Testament given by God records much tribulation (Acts 14:22).
- D. Paul is not laying down a general rule for all time regarding marriage, but for Corinth then.
- E. Paul is not laying the foundation for monastic living by proscribing marriage for needy men.
- F. As he stated clearly earlier, this recommendation only applied to men able to contain (7-9).
- G. When facing questions or perceived contradictions in this chapter, recall this *present distress*.
- H. It should be obvious a man without a wife and children would be able to hide, escape, move, go to jail, or suffer martyrdom without the great care of a man with one or both of them.
- I. Remember our Lord's similar warning to women about escape (Luke 21:20-24; 23:27-31).

7:27 **To avoid reactions by his life and recommendation, Paul instructed those in both situations.**

- A. If a man was bound to a believer or unbeliever, it was too late for him to become single now.
 - 1. Paul had already dealt with both situations, and divorce was not an option for either case.
 - 2. Corinth had many marital questions, and Paul marked a very careful course in his words.
 - 3. Here again we apply the sovereignty and providence of God. Trust Him in your situation.
 - 4. Though a married man might now see the wisdom of being single, he could not obtain it.
- B. If a man was loosed from a wife, as in 7:15, there were several advantages not to seek one.
 - 1. Remember this text for those who think that the loosed person in 7:15 cannot remarry.
 - 2. By the use of "loosed" here in light of "not under bondage" of 7:15, we have the answer.
 - 3. Though Paul began this section by addressing "virgins," we see he includes the divorced, for he is dealing with all cases of single members.

7:28 **Marriage in Corinth had pros and cons, and they could choose or reject it for themselves.**

- A. Continuing his immediate context of a divorced man, he allows them to marry, if they wish.

- B. Continuing his larger context from 7:25, he allows virgins to marry as well, if they wish.
- C. Because Paul is not laying down black and white commands, he must use extra explanation.
- D. By this verse allowing marriage, we understand how Paul was not giving a command (7:25).
- E. By this verse allowing marriage, we understand Paul is expanding an earlier point (7:6-9).
- F. Though there may be three reasons against marriage we understood earlier, yet it was not sin.
- G. Though Paul knew that such persons marrying would have trouble, he spared them any further negative discussion of the trouble in the flesh, for their marriage was not a sin.

7:29 Due to necessity of redeeming the short time they had, saints should use all things wisely.

- A. He pressed them with a sense of commitment and urgency due to the shortness of time.
 - 1. The apostles spoke of the lateness of time, given the last times of Christ (Rom 13:11).
 - 2. The Bible speaks often of the brevity of life and the shortness of a man's age to serve.
 - 3. Paul's manner included exhorting saints to redeem the time with wisdom (Eph 5:15-17).
 - 4. History indicates that horrible persecutions did arrive shortly upon saints under Rome.
 - 5. To use the shortness of time in any sense requires a wise and prudent use of all things.
 - 6. Marriage, which is a commitment for the future, should be ruled in light of little time.
 - 7. Even boasting of tomorrow is sin in light of the brevity and uncertainty of life (Pr 27:1).
- B. To understand this and the following verses (7:29-33), carefully note Paul's use of "be."
 - 1. "It remaineth," is Paul's application of the shortness of time to the right use of marriage.
 - 2. This is an imperative verb from Paul for married saints to act as if they were not married.
 - 3. Of course, Paul does not mean to defraud or divorce a wife (7:5,27), but to serve Christ.
 - 4. A man's priorities and affections, no matter his situation, must be directed toward Christ.
 - 5. The lesson is to set affections above and not be consumed by allowed pleasures (Col 3:2).
 - 6. Here is the heart of the spiritually minded – even those things allowed should be limited.
 - 7. Those that are married should live for Jesus Christ as if they were not married. Hear it!
- C. "Both" connects the exhortation for marriage to weeping and the other cares following it.
 - 1. This is an acceptable use of the word "both" to connect more than two objects (OED).
 - 2. The KJB gives us some examples (Rom 14:9; I Cor 4:11; II Cor 9:10; Phil 4:9; Heb 2:4).

7:30 Due to the shortness of time, weeping, rejoicing, and finances should be governed wisely.

- A. You must understand Paul's imperative "be" from the previous verse to grasp this verse.
- B. Those married were to act as if they were not married as far as keeping love of Christ first.
- C. Those plagued with sorrow in this life should not allow it to cost them service to Jesus Christ.
- D. Those blessed abundantly in this life cannot allow it to distract them from service to Christ.
- E. Those engaged in commerce in this life should not allow economic ambition to cheat Christ.
- F. In each case, the language is an imperative command to live as if the situation did not exist.

7:31 The saints' use of the world is never to include abusing it, for it is very temporal in nature.

- A. You must understand Paul's imperative "be" from the previous two verses to get this verse.
- B. Any use of this world, economic or educational or social, cannot exceed God's allowed use.
- C. Abusing this world is allowing the use of it to encroach on our call out of it (Matthew 6:24; Romans 12:1-2; James 4:4; I John 2:15-17).
- D. Everything in this world, fame, estates, clothing, or transportation is all temporary and vain.

7:32 The spiritual need to be without carefulness commends even further against marriage.

- A. Three verses argued against marriage by the short time and vanity of temporal things (29-31).
- B. Now the apostle exhorts to another general rule for Christians – make choices against care.
 - 1. This is one of the governing principles of a Christian's life to be consulted in decisions.
 - 2. "Care" here is the worry, fear, and distress coming from excessive duties and obligations.

3. For example, being an employee for another is less care than owning your own business.
4. For example, having three children to properly train is less care than having ten children.
5. But the argument in this chapter and immediate context is marriage, not jobs or children.
6. The power of this rule is Paul warning against something as noble and good as marriage.
- C. A single man who has chosen to remain single for the Lord can dedicate himself to the Lord.
 1. He can dedicate his thoughts day and night much more to the Lord than can any husband.
 2. A married man must be preoccupied with loving and providing for his wife and children.
 3. This free man will have more time for reading, prayer, meditation, service, and teaching.

7:33 **A married man is preoccupied with loving and providing for his wife and children.**

- A. Domestic security and tranquility require substantial worldly effort by a man toward his wife.
- B. A married man must maintain a comfortable home, and that for two persons, not just one.
- C. The married man is driven to more care in the world in order to properly support his wife.

7:34 **The lesson being taught about carefulness in marriage applies to women as well as to men.**

- A. There is a difference between a virgin and a wife – a different amount of care in her life.
- B. A virgin, an unmarried woman, with a spiritual mind may dedicate herself to Jesus Christ.
- C. She can concentrate more fully on keeping her body and spirit pure for her beloved Lord.
- D. But the married woman, like the married man, is preoccupied with rightly loving a husband.
- E. She is forced to great involvement in the world in order to be a better wife for her husband.

7:35 **Paul's plan in commending the single state was not to cause trouble but show a better way.**

- A. The reason for reviewing three reasons against marriage was for their own spiritual profit.
 1. First was the persecution at Corinth for believers, which marriage complicated (25-28).
 2. Second was the shortness of the time, which should be used as expeditiously as possible.
 3. Third was the carefulness required in marriage, which took away from serving Christ.
- B. His intent was not a sexual snare, for he had already commended marriage for such (6-9).
- C. His purpose was not negativism about marriage at all, but rather exalting serving Christ.
- D. His purpose was not to create unnecessary or excessive burdens, but to promote spirituality.
- E. A person, man or woman, committed to serving Christ without marriage is a comely thing, for they do not have the distractions of soul and body required to rightly keep up a marriage.
- F. The difference between Paul and Rome is great – they require it as law (I Timothy 4:1-3).

7:36 **In light of his warnings against marriage, Paul cautioned fathers against cruelty to virgins.**

- A. Here is lesson six in the chapter, the rules for fathers with daughters still living at home.
- B. For three verses Paul will deal with fathers facing a choice regarding their virgin daughters.
- C. This is not a verse about men addressing their own virginity and whether they should marry.
 1. Effeminate moderns cannot grasp a father's authority to make decisions for a daughter.
 2. The apostle had already clearly dealt with male virgins and the decision to marry (25-28).
 3. The language is obviously describing a virgin under the authority of her father (36-38).
 4. Consider the male pronouns for the father and the female pronouns for the virgin (36-38).
 5. Some of the commentators on this passage are so weak they must twist Paul into a knot.
- D. In God's blessed scheme of things for orderly humanity, the father had enormous authority.
 1. He could annul any vow that she made to God not in his best interests (Num 30:3-5).
 2. He could forbid a daughter from rightly marrying her lover and seducer (Ex 22:16-17).
 3. He could sell his daughter to be another man's maid, which included sex (Ex 21:7-11).
 4. He could give his daughter to be a wife for the dowry, without the girl knowing the guy.
- E. But Paul interceded for daughters strongly needing to marry by giving allowance to fathers.
 1. A godly and strong father hearing Paul's words (1-35) would consider keeping her single.

2. However, Paul gave grieved fathers the liberty to let their daughters marry without sin.
3. Good fathers will know their daughters well enough to be able to discern body and spirit.
4. Of course, there is never a need or reason to permit a daughter to marry out of the Lord.
- F. Some peculiar language here indicated at what time in life that marriage became a concern.
 1. Of course, in our society, where women do not marry until 23, these words are strange.
 2. “Flower of her age” is puberty or marrying age, when a need to marry rises, as in 7:7-9.
 3. John Gill, one of the greatest Baptist commentators and Jewish experts, said it was 12½.
 4. Medical records indicate puberty for girls has fallen a couple of years over the last 200.
 5. Prior generations did not have the phenomenon of many girls single between 15 and 30.

7:37 **However, if a daughter did not need to marry, a father keeping her single did a good thing.**

- A. Remember all that has gone before, so as to understand the sober reasons against marriage.
 1. The many difficulties of married life can be missed by remaining single (7:1; Mat 19:10).
 2. Persecution, which was present in Corinth, made married life further difficult (7:25-28).
 3. The shortness and vanity of life should lead wise saints to live unmarried (7:29-31).
 4. The distraction of a spouse should lead spiritual saints to live without care (7:32-35).
- B. A man with conviction and strength was at liberty to keep his daughter a perpetual virgin.
 1. In light of the reasons Paul has given, spiritually minded men and daughters would agree.
 2. However, this verse does not at all negate Paul’s warning of the need to marry (7:7-9,36).
 3. This verse, in contrast to the previous one, describes a daughter able to live unmarried.
 4. The references to the father’s heart and will reflect the serious nature of the decision.
- C. Because a spiritually minded daughter could serve the Lord Christ better as a single girl at home with her father, he commended the decision as virtuous in light of what he has written.

7:38 **To save any father from unnecessary grief, Paul commended both decisions by fathers.**

- A. The man who blessed his daughter with a godly husband in marriage made a good choice.
- B. The man keeping a spiritually minded daughter at home serving Christ made a better choice.
- C. The liberty to marry or not marry here does not conflict with any other passage of Scripture.
- D. Never forget the overriding situation in Corinth of the present distress of persecution (7:26).

7:39 **Wives are loosed from marriage by a husband’s death, but remarriage must be in Christ.**

- A. Here is lesson seven in the chapter, Paul’s judgment rules for widows about marrying again.
- B. Some say Paul here and in Rom 7:1-3 taught that only death frees a woman for remarriage.
 1. Paul argued here from a general rule, ignoring the many exceptions of both testaments.
 2. We are bound to understand the Bible in context, which means the exceptions Jesus and Paul both taught, fornication and desertion, respectively, are to be understood here.
 3. The law allowed even more exceptions than these under certain conditions and/or with a bill of divorcement (Ex 21:7-11; Deut 21:10-14; 24:1-4).
 4. This list from the specific Law of Moses does not include Hagar, David, or Ezra divorces.
 5. But in the ordinary course of things, marriage is for life – it is a permanent relationship.
 6. When we covenant a marriage, we say, “Till death do us part,” but divorce and remarriage is clearly implied, if the situation deteriorates to an ungodly extent.
 7. Jesus allowed divorce and remarriage for fornication, Paul for desertion by an unbeliever.
 8. If widows and their right to remarry is the lesson here, divorce is totally out of his mind.
- C. In agreement with all Paul has said, a widow, freed from her previous marriage, could marry.
- D. But yet Paul sticks in that very important reminder – marriage for a saint must be in the Lord.
 1. He taught this elsewhere (11:11; 9:5), and the rest of the Bible does often (Ex 34:12-16).
 2. Saints are at liberty to marry whomsoever they will ... but they must marry another saint.
 3. Consult the outline on marriage in the Lord to properly define this spiritual qualification.

7:40 **However, a wife that refrains from marriage follows the inspired recommendation of Paul.**

- A. In agreement with all Paul has said before, a widow freed from marriage should stay single.
- B. The reasons for a widow remaining single are the same as those given above for all others.
- C. Paul's recommendation here does not contradict I Timothy 5:14 when rightly understood.
 - 1. Keep in mind that there was a present distress that colored marriage in Corinth (7:26).
 - 2. Paul in I Timothy 5 dealt with the financial support of widows dependent on the church.
 - 3. Young widows so supported would have many temptations in the flesh (I Tim 5:11-13).
 - 4. Because of youth and lusts, they would not be able to sustain like Anna (Luke 2:36-37).
 - 5. Paul's remedy for young widows was marriage and children to keep them out of trouble, rather than taking the risk of putting them on the church dole and later regretting it.
- D. Since we do not have a present distress, a young widow is entirely free to marry or not marry, if her financial situation or family can support her; otherwise, she ought to get married.

Conclusion:

- 1. Our duty is to follow God's rules for sex, deciding to marry, maintaining marriages and peace. Lord, help us.
- 2. There are seven difficult verses in this section, which the young men should remember (1,6,10,12,14,25,29).
- 3. May the Lord bless us to maximize our marriages in all the ways dealt with in these few verses from Paul.
- 4. God gave you an important rule to guide all decisions – avoid carefulness, even in allowed things (7:32).

Additional study:

- 1. Members may consult the numerous outlines from Couples' Retreats and Men's Meetings pertaining to fully expanded details of our marital sexual duties and privileges from the Bible.
- 2. Sermon outline on marriage in the Lord: <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/Sermons/pdf/MarriageInTheLord.pdf>.