

# Paul's First Letter to the Church at Corinth

## 1 Corinthians

Victory Christian Center    Elder Tim Herman    May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2009

### Married or single? (Chapter 7)

- 7:1...apparently the Corinthians had written Paul and asked for his judgment regarding marriage
- Controversial positions of Apostle Paul
  - It is good for a person to not marry (v.1)
  - Paul wishes all men were unmarried (like him) (v.7)
  - Unbelievers are sanctified by their believing spouse (v.14)
  - Remaining single is better than getting married (v.38)
- Why did he say these things?
- Did he *really mean* what he said?
- Paul's view of marriage in other letters
  - Forbidding to marry is heresy: 1 Tim 4:3 (letter to a young pastor)
  - Marriage is a metaphor of our relationship with Christ: Eph. 5:28-33, Rom. 7:4, 2 Cor. 11:2
- 7:2...one reason to get married is to eliminate fornication
  - Note verse 2 forbids polygamy (rampant in the first 50 years of the Mormon church. Joseph Smith had 33 wives, and Brigham Young had 55 wives)
- V.3...husband/wife are to provide "due love" to the other
- V.4...the body of each belongs to the other
  - Note the equality in responsibility
- V.5..."do not deprive (defraud)" the other
  - Withholding the "bed" is an act of 'fraud' because it takes away from what was promised (unless both agree to abstain for spiritual reasons)
  - Satan will tempt the 'defrauded' spouse
- V.6...Paul clarifies his statement in verse 5 by saying he was speaking by "permission" and NOT by "commandment". Greek for 'permission' is *sungnomen*, meaning 'knowing together' as if two people decided to agree. So Paul is not commanding husband/wife to sexual intimacy, but rather saying there should be agreement.
  - It's important to note Paul's positions may sometimes be by command, and other times by suggestion/opinion...this happens in chapter 7.
- V.7...Paul wishes that men were celibate.
  - Paul himself was probably a widow (not known for certain). Acts 26:10 Paul mentions in his testimony to Agrippa that he had '*cast his vote*' as part of the Sanhedrin court (all members were required to be married men). Also see 1 Cor. 9:5.
  - Paul suggested celibacy is a gift
  - Gift of celibacy characteristics
    - Fully devoted to God and His work
    - Not interested in marriage
  - Jesus teaching on celibacy (eunuchs): Matt. 19:1-12
    - Some "born that way"
    - Some "made that way by men" (male slave who protected queens)
    - Some "because they wanted to serve God's kingdom exclusively"
- V.8,9...returns the question at-hand listed in v.1
  - It is "good to remain unmarried"...note Paul did NOT say it was *better* to remain unmarried

- Better to get married if sexual drive cannot be controlled
- Why did Paul think it was good to remain single? 1 Cor. 7:25,26
  - Because of “*present circumstances*”, refers to the 2nd coming of Christ and the associated evil time (see Matt 24:1-14, Luke 21:23)
- V.10,11...command for married people to NOT divorce (note that this is not Paul’s opinion, but rather a commandment from the Lord, see Mark 10:2-12)
- V.12-16...the subject of mixed marriage (believers with unbelievers)
  - V.12...”to the rest I say this (not the Lord). Jesus’ teachings in the gospels did not cover mixed marriages because they were essentially non-existent in Judaism. Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, so mixed marriages were common, probably a reason the Corinthians wrote Paul asking for guidance
  - V.14...how does the *believing* spouse “sanctify” the *non-believing* spouse? Two thoughts:
    - 1. Paul was saying the marriage is sanctified, and there is no reason to have a divorce simply because one becomes a Christian.
    - 2. The believer brings a sanctifying influence to the non-believing spouse and children
- V.12-16...the subject of mixed marriage (believers with unbelievers)
  - V.15, 16...separation/divorce
    - Christians may not divorce an unbeliever
    - If an unbeliever chooses to leave (willful desertion), then the Christian is “not bound” to the marriage. Martin Luther argued that the Christian is free to re-marry whenever the unbeliever divorces (instead of waiting for the unbeliever to remarry), but Paul is not that clear. (Not addressed in Christ’s teaching)
    - God has called us (Christians) to peace. Christians should not ‘enslave’ an unbeliever or cause permanent strife in order to maintain a marriage.
    - Paul seems to allow/support divorce, but only when all hope is gone
- V.17-40...Paul expounds on his stated position