

(1 Corinthians) Overview to Chapter 7

by Brian Brodersen

Paul addresses the Corinthians' questions and opinions on marriage, celibacy, and spirituality, refuting the ascetic view and emphasizing the importance of understanding Christianity from the Bible.

Duration: 51:17

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 7:10

Topics: "Eschatology", "Marriage"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the concept of time and the impending end of the world. He highlights that Christians are the only ones who understand that time is not endless and that there will be a climactic point in history when everything will come to a halt. The preacher also discusses the importance of using one's position in society to glorify the Lord rather than seeking personal gratification. Additionally, he provides practical advice on the difference in responsibilities between married and unmarried individuals, noting that marriage brings obligations that can limit one's freedom to serve the Lord.

Transcript

As we come to the seventh chapter of this first epistle to the Corinthians, we come to sort of a new section. Paul has, up until this point, he's been addressing problems in the church that had been reported to him by certain people in the fellowship or people who had visited the fellowship way back in the beginning of the epistle. He mentions the house of Chloe and how he had heard from the house of Chloe that there were divisions in the church.

And we saw that the divisions were rooted in human pride and they were based upon an enamoration with human wisdom rather than an understanding of the wisdom of God. Paul went on to address then issues of sexual immorality that had also been reported to him. He said in the fifth chapter, it has been reported that there is sexual immorality among you and so forth.

So now as we come to chapter seven, Paul is going to address issues that were directed to him by the church itself. Apparently, they had written to Paul. It seems from studying the epistle that there is a letter that Paul wrote to them that we do not have available to us.

We have first and second Corinthians, but it appears that there was another letter that Paul wrote that's alluded to. But they also wrote to Paul. They wrote to him asking him certain questions.

And it seems in some ways writing to him, expressing their opinion on things and maybe even disagreeing with him to some extent. So as we come to chapter seven, we come now to sort of a new section where Paul is going to be addressing the issues that they brought up in the letter that they wrote to him. And so now concerning the things of which you wrote to me, it is good for a man not to touch a woman.

Now, here's the dilemma in verse one, these words, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. Are these. The words of Paul in response to some of the things that they had written to him, or.

Are these things that were actually contained in the letter that they had written to Paul, in other words. It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Did Paul say that or was that something that the Corinthians themselves had said in their letter that Paul will now go on to address? Although the traditional view is that it is Paul who is speaking and saying it is good for a man not to touch a woman, I think it probably is the other situation where this is something that they were saying and Paul is going to agree with them partially, but he's going to make some qualifications to that.

You see what what appears to have happened in Corinth is that they had embraced. Sort of an ascetic view of the Christian life now, the ascetics or asceticism taught that. Through.

Self-denial, you could attain to a higher state of spirituality. And asceticism was very prevalent. During the time of the New Testament era, and of course, it preceded that as well, and asceticism is still with us today in many religions, many religions teach that through severe self-denial, you can attain to a higher form of spirituality.

And it seems that that mentality had crept in among the Corinthians and what they had concluded. Was that sexual relationships should not be part of the Christian experience at all, and that celibacy was the evidence of a deeper spirituality. Now, Paul is going to talk about celibacy, and in a sense, Paul is going to encourage celibacy, but for entirely different reasons.

You see, their reasons for encouraging celibacy were because it will make you more spiritual. Because if you're celibate, you'll be closer to God. Paul denies that completely.

And of course, the New Testament denies that. But Paul was in support of celibacy for a more practical reason. He realized that the single person had more freedom in serving God.

And so he was an advocate of celibacy if God had gifted you to be celibate. But if God had not gifted you to be celibate, Paul then, of course, did not encourage celibacy. And he goes out of his way in the seventh chapter to let people know that if they choose to marry that they're in perfect harmony with God's word and they're not sinning at all.

So it seems that there was this ascetic view that had crept into the church. And Paul is going to refute that, especially in the first six verses of this chapter here. So let me read to you verses one through six.

So now concerning the things of which you wrote to me, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. This this phrase not to touch a woman is a euphemism, first century euphemism for having sexual relations, much like our modern euphemism of someone going to bed together. That equals having sexual relations.

So a man touching a woman at that time was a euphemism for sexual relations, sexual intercourse. So here's Paul's statement on it. Verse two, but I think is the best translation of the word there.

Some versions, my version says nevertheless, but I think but is a better way to move into this because I think what Paul's doing here is he says, OK, this is your statement. It is good for a man to touch a woman. Paul says, I agree, but there needs to be some qualification here.

And what he's going to go on and show is that that is true outside of the bond of marriage. And he's already dealt with the issue of fornication, which we talked about last week. And fornication is sexual relationships apart outside of the marriage bond.

So Paul is in full agreement that fornication is wrong. He's agreeing with them if that's what they're talking about. But now he's going to go on to qualify and to show that this does not apply within the boundary of marriage.

Now, this is not something that was only an issue back at that time, and I'll show you why in just a moment, but let's read through verse six. Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband rendered to the wife, the affection do her and likewise also the wife to her husband.

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 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. I say this as a concession, not as a commandment.

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 manner. Now, to show the relevance of this. Presently, the ascetic mentality again, asceticism teaches that through severe self-denial, you can attain spiritual merit.

Asceticism has been perpetuated primarily through Roman Catholicism. Roman Catholicism early on, departing from a true biblical Christianity, embraced a lot of the ascetic thinking. If you study the monastic movement, you'll find that the monks were.

Ascetics and they believe that by mutilating their flesh or depriving themselves of certain pleasures that that would inevitably bring them into closer favor with God. And so they would they would treat their bodies severely. They would subject themselves to extremities.

They would strip themselves bare and sit in the cold and and almost freeze to death and think that in doing so they were actually gaining favor with God. Now, you see, this kind of mentality has nothing to do with biblical Christianity. Now, this thing also would go over into the area of sexual relations because there is a pleasurable aspect to the sexual relationship.

The thought was you should not have sex because that brings pleasure. And in experiencing pleasure, you're catering to the body and you're decreasing your spirituality. So to adopt a celibate lifestyle was then in turn to have the opposite effect.

If you were celibate and denying yourself of that gratification, then you were growing deeper and deeper as a person spiritually. Now, as I said, that mentality has been perpetuated through Roman Catholicism. I was reading in my Roman Catholic encyclopedia last night just to just to rush up on the current attitude of the church.

The current attitude of the church is pretty much what it's been for hundreds and hundreds of years, that if you have as a husband and wife sexual relations for the purpose of pleasure that you are sinning. And that's why you have the strong emphasis in Catholicism on against birth control and things of that nature. They see the sexual relationship as primarily for the purpose of procreation.

Well, we know that, of course, it's through the sexual relationship that procreation takes place. But that is not the primary purpose of the marital relationship or the sexual relationship. And to deny the aspect of pleasure and to see the sexual relationship apart from procreation as something that's merely gratifying the flesh is more in tune with asceticism than it is with Christianity.

And that's what Paul is making clear here. Paul was not an ascetic at all. So he agrees with them about a man having sexual relations with a woman being wrong if the man and the woman are not married.

But he insists if the man and the woman are married, then they are to have a healthy sexual life together. And Paul actually makes a concession. He says he speaks of the concession here.

The concession that he's making is that you can take a break from your normal sexual relations for fasting and prayer. But he says that's a concession. So to simplify it, what I want to emphasize is this.

The sexual relationship between a husband and a wife is something that God has ordained. It's something that is wonderful and it's something that should be a regular part of the marital relationship. And there's nothing sinful about it.

There's nothing the matter with it. And unfortunately, through Roman Catholicism, there's been this perpetuating of the ascetic mentality, which has brought so many people into bondage. And of course, there are multitudes of Catholics who live in bondage to guilt because they use methods of birth control and things like that.

They've decided that, you know, we've got 10 kids already, we really can't afford to have any more. But they don't want to adopt the celibate lifestyle. And so they resume with their sexual relations as they ought to.

But yet they live with this guilt that each time they're having relations, they're in some way, shape or form sinning against God and displeasing God, to say the least. This is the tragedy of religion that disconnects itself from the biblical revelation. You see, the Bible gives us such a beautiful balance on everything.

And so Paul, he stands here against an ascetic mentality. And as I said earlier, Paul is going to go on and talk about the value of celibacy. But his reason for valuing celibacy was entirely different than theirs.

He didn't see it as being a demonstration of deeper spirituality. He saw it practically as being just a more effective way to serve God without the distraction of a family and so forth. And so he gives clear instructions here that a wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does.

Likewise, the husband does not have authority over his body, but the wife does. And he says specifically, do not deprive one another except with consent, mutual agreement to take a temporary break in the sexual relationship for the purpose of fasting and prayer. But then he says, this I say is a concession, not a commandment.

In other words, what he's saying is God hasn't commanded that every now and again you take a break from the sexual relationship and fast and pray. That isn't a commandment. Paul is saying, you know, we can make allowance for such a thing, but God doesn't require that.

So much of Christianity, again through the influence of Romanism, has been affected by an ascetic view of things. And I think that in many ways this has given people the wrong impression about what it is to be a Christian. Of course, many people, when they think of being a Christian, they think of something that's dull, something that's boring, something that is going to definitely limit your fun.

If you want to just drop out of life in the real world, become a Christian. That's the thinking of so many people. But that's because of the false teaching that's crept into the church, undetected in many cases.

God has not called us to become stoic. Stoicism was a Greek philosophy that had nothing to do with Christianity. God hasn't called us to not enjoy life.

Becoming a Christian doesn't mean automatically that you can no longer have any pleasure. These are all distortions. The thing that God is calling us away from as Christians is sin.

Sin is the destructive factor that God wants to remove from our lives. But the Christian life is a life of excitement. It's a life of pleasure.

It's a different kind of pleasure. It's pleasure the way God intended it. Going back to the sexual thing for a moment, I don't want to belabor this.

I know it's for some people to even have to listen to it. But God created the sexual relationship as something that is enjoyable. And within God's boundaries, it's to be experienced and all the joy of it is to be experienced.

And there's nothing at all the matter with that. And again, this is the tragedy of a Christianity that's not biblical because it gives the wrong view to people. And many people are put off by Christianity because of their assumptions of what Christianity is based on what they've seen through, you know, certain churches and denominations and so forth.

I just read an article yesterday about God. I think the title of the article was God going into psychotherapy or something like that. I can't remember exactly what it was, but that was the gist of it.

God. It was the need to merge Christian tradition with psychotherapy and come up with a more relevant message for people today. And the man who's written the book on it, the man that was being interviewed, had formerly been a Roman Catholic priest, and he found that through the teachings of the church and so forth, he was unable to really help people.

So he left the priesthood and became a psychotherapist. But yet he sees some value in traditional religion. So he's seeking to merge the two things together.

And I thought as I read, I thought, you know, the tragedy is this man. He's talking about merging Christianity and psychotherapy, but he's never known Christianity. He experienced a counterfeit in a large sense, something that wasn't really Christianity, and he recognized the weakness, the inadequacy of it, the failure of it, and he left it.

But he realizes there's some value in the traditional thing. So now he's wanting to combine the two. And I think that's true with so many people.

So many people have said Christianity has failed. So many people don't want to take into consideration Christianity because they say, oh, I've tried that. I was brought up in the church.

But let me ask you this. Do you know what true Christianity is? You might have been brought up in a church, but that today doesn't mean anything. It doesn't necessarily mean that you understand Christianity, because unfortunately, many churches today don't understand Christianity.

We have to get our understanding of Christianity from the Bible. And that's the only place we can get it. And whenever you find any organization that claims to be Christian adding to what the Bible says or taking away from what it says or reinterpreting it according to their own ideas and so forth, that's where you get something that isn't true Christianity.

So Paul was not an ascetic. He was not supporting celibacy because he thought that people who were celibate were more spiritual, as we're going to go on to see. He just sees that there are certain practical advantages to it.

And so he says in verse seven, he says, I wish that all men were even as I myself. Paul was not married and was living a celibate life. Now, it does seem quite probable that Paul, the apostle, was at one time a married man.

He speaks about marriage as though he had himself the experience of marriage. That's one indicator that he was probably married. Secondly, there's a strong indication in the New Testament that Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin, which was the ruling body in Israel.

And you had to be married to be a member of the Sanhedrin. Paul, of course, was a rabbi and a rabbi who wasn't married was an oddball, to say the least. So it's quite probable that Paul was married.

Perhaps he'd become widowed, perhaps because he had left Judaism, become a Christian. Perhaps his wife had left him. We don't know how he ended up in this single state that he was in at the time that he went about his ministry as an apostle.

But he recognizes, again, the advantage of the single life as a Christian. And so that's why he says, 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 manner. So he recognizes that celibacy the call to live a single life is something that certain people are gifted to do and other people are not.

And I think from experience, the vast majority of people are not gifted to do that. People have come to me and said, oh, I, you know, you can tell they're disturbed and they say, I think God might be calling me to be a celibate. And then they say, but I just I really have these desires.

I say, well, that's a good indication that God isn't calling you to be a celibate. The fact that the desire exists says the gift of celibacy isn't there. You have the gift of celibacy.

It's really not an issue. I mean, it might be, you know, a little bit of an issue, but it's not something that you just live with this burning passion for, you know, a relationship. But God, God hasn't allowed this.

That's ascetic. That's legalism. That's something that's not in sync with true biblical Christianity.

So Paul now is going to address. A variety of issues, he says, but I say to the unmarried and to the widows. It is good for them if they remain even as I am.

But if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion. Common sense right there. Now to the married, I command, yet not I, but the Lord.

Now, Paul, in this chapter, he says this, I command, yet not I, but the Lord. Later on, he's going to say the Lord hasn't commanded this, but I say to you.

And what we have to understand is that Paul is not saying that what I say doesn't really hold any weight because it's just my opinion. What Paul is simply saying is that I'm going to address things that Jesus did not address. And when he says, I say, but not I, but the Lord, he's going to be referring to things that Jesus specifically talked about.

Jesus specifically talked about this issue that he's going to address here. And this is it. The Lord said a wife is not to depart from or divorce her husband.

That's the context. The word depart is referring to divorce. So a wife is not to divorce her husband.

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. So Paul is simply echoing the very words of Jesus.

If you look in Matthew chapter five or Matthew chapter 19 or Mark chapter 10, you can find the teaching of Jesus on the subject of marriage and divorce. Jesus taught that among believers, among believers, two people who are believers and who are married together, there is not to be divorce except in the case of infidelity. Jesus allowed divorce in the case of infidelity.

But apart from that, there's no divorce. But Paul recognizes that's the ideal, no divorce. But Paul recognizes that a divorce might occur.

It might be that people just cannot get on together. They just can't do it. So divorce might take place.

What then, Paul says, if that's the case, then you must remain unmarried or be reconciled to your spouse. So when a divorce takes place between believers where there's been no violation of the wedding vows, where infidelity hasn't taken place, if a divorce is to come about, those who are divorced are not free to be remarried but must remain unmarried unless they are reconciled to one another. That's hard teaching, especially in our day and age.

But that's the teaching of Scripture. And of course, this is directed to believers. This is what God has to say to his people.

This is his instruction. Now, verse 12, but to the rest, I, not the Lord, say. So what Paul is doing here, as I said, is he's going to address something that Jesus didn't address.

There was no opportunity for Jesus to address it. Jesus, his primary ministry was to Israel. And he was dealing with people who were.

Because of the covenant they were in, they were believers. Now, Paul is going to address the issue of believers being married to unbelievers, and he's going to give his counsel on that. He says, if any brother has a wife who does not believe and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her.

And a woman who has a husband who does not believe if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. Now, it could be that the same group that was insisting on celibacy for ascetic reasons were looking at believers being married to unbelievers and drawing the immediate conclusion that this relationship ought not to be. It could be that they were actually encouraging people to divorce their spouses who were unbelievers.

And if so, it was probably based on the fact that their spouses were pagan. You see, back in New Testament times. The unbeliever was generally an adherent of a pagan religion.

So the reasoning would be this. God certainly doesn't want you joined to a pagan. And if you're in a relationship with a pagan, you as a Christian are going to be contaminated by that.

Paul says not so. He says it does not automatically mean that a divorce is in order just because you're married to a pagan. Listen to what he says.

He says, 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. You see, Paul is saying this.

He says far from you being contaminated by the unbeliever, by the pagan, the pagan is actually sanctified by you. It's the reverse of what they were thinking. Now, what does it mean for the unbeliever to be sanctified or the children to be holy, as is stated here in verse 14? Well, we're certain that it does not mean that they are automatically saved because of the status of their spouse.

A non-Christian man is not saved because his wife becomes a Christian or vice versa. When Paul uses the term sanctified or holy here, he's using it in its most literal sense, because the word literally means separated. And the idea that Paul is expressing here is that a non-believer married to a believer is a person who has been separated.

To the work of God, in other words, they become a special object of God's grace. Now, practically, you know how that works out. You ladies who are married to non-Christian men, you pray for them, don't you? You pray that God will save them.

You see, that's what Paul's talking about. That's the sanctification right there. They become a special object of God's working because of your influence and your prayers for them.

And the same is true for you men who are married to non-Christian women. They have become a special object of God's working because of your prayers for them and because of your witness to them. And so Paul, he's encouraging them not to assume that because they're married to an unbeliever, automatically that marriage is nullified.

He says God can use this now. He does say in verse 15, but if the unbeliever depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace.

So what he's saying is that if the unbeliever does not want to remain in the marriage, then the believer is not under obligation to keep the marriage together. If you're married to an unbeliever and this unbeliever says to you, I, I'm not going to put up with this Christianity. I'm not going to accept the fact that you're following Christ now.

I don't want to have anything to do with Christ or with you. And this marriage is over as far as I'm concerned, unless you. Recant of your Christian faith or whatever the case might be, well, that, of course, is where you have to take your stand for Christ, and if they decide to go, then they go.

And God sets you free to go on with him and even to be remarried in the future if that happens to come about. But again, as Paul says in verse 16, for how do you know a wife, whether you will save your husband or how do you know a husband, whether you will save your wife? You see, Paul says, if they're willing to remain with you, stay there because God can use you in their life. To lead them to him.

Now, one thing I want to just touch on real quickly is this whole idea of a person being willing to live with them and this what I want to say here applies more to a woman, a believing woman being married to an unbelieving man. I've seen situations over the years where, you know, a woman is married to an unbeliever. The unbeliever doesn't want to leave, but he persecutes the wife, torments the wife, abuses the wife, some cases even literally physically abuses the wife.

And yet, because the unbeliever is unwilling to leave, the wife is feeling bound to the marriage. I've got to stay in this marriage and experience this abuse, some cases physically, because it says if the unbeliever is willing to live with you, then you're not to seek a divorce. Well, I think any man who beats his wife is demonstrating right there that he's not really willing to live with her.

And I don't think any woman is under any obligation as a Christian to stay in a situation where her life is being endangered. Another case that arises quite often is a man will claim to be a Christian, but yet live like a non-Christian. And knowing, maybe having a little bit of Bible knowledge, knowing that the wife is not to divorce him, he will keep the situation together, you know, simply by refusing to leave and unwilling to depart, but yet sort of holding the wife hostage in a sense and threatening if there's going to be a divorce, you're going to get it and it's going to be on your head.

I've seen this kind of thing over and over and over again. Well, my answer to that is any man who claims to be a Christian and beats his wife is not a Christian at all, regardless of what he claims to be. Any man who is verbally, severely abusive to his wife while claiming to be a Christian is not a Christian at all.

I can tell you horror stories of things I've seen over the years. Men dealing drugs right out of their home, endangering the lives of their family, people coming in and out with guns and things of that nature, doing drug deals. And, you know, yet the man is claiming to be a Christian and threatening the woman, don't leave me because if you do, the divorce is on your head.

The unbeliever is unwilling to live with you by his actions that is being demonstrated, endangering your life and so forth. So those things might not have application here, but those are real issues that we must face. But again, on the positive side, Paul says the believer can affect the unbeliever for good.

The believer can be used by God to lead the unbeliever into a relationship with Christ. But as God has distributed to each one, verse 17, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches.

Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is a it was just a way of referring to being Jewish.

Uncircumcision was a way of referring to being non-Jewish. So what Paul is saying, he's saying, is anyone called as a Jew? Remain a Jew. Don't become a Gentile.

There's no need to do that. But likewise, is anyone called as a Gentile? Don't become a Jew. That's not necessary.

He says circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters. So he's saying, basically, stay where you're at. Where God has saved you, just be there.

Be content. If God wants to change things, that's okay. He's going to go on and deal with that a little more clearly in the next few verses.

But going back to the Jewish Gentile thing, there have been, you know, in the early days of the church, of course, there was pressure on the Gentiles to become Jews and there were certain Jews in the church who really believed that unless you became a Jew, you couldn't be a true Christian. So they were seeking to convert the Gentiles to Judaism first and then to Christianity. Paul says, no, this is not right.

Now, through the long course of history, the church is predominantly Gentile today. Sometimes a Jew will come into the church and feel sort of a compelling to become a Gentile in a sense of, you know, not have any identification with their Jewish roots or any of that. Well, that's not right either.

It's not necessary. That's what Paul's saying. Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called.

Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it. But if you can be made free. Rather, use it for he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freed man.

Likewise, he who is called while free is Christ's slave. You were bought at a price. Do not become slaves of men.

Brethren, let each one remain with God in the state in which he was called. Some people have been critical of the New Testament because it. It.

Hasn't spoken out more. Directly on the subject of slavery, the New Testament speaks a lot about slavery, but a slavery that most people don't recognize the greater form of slavery that goes unrecognized by the vast majority of people is slavery to sin. And what the New Testament teaches is if you're liberated from the slavery to sin, then you're the freest person on the planet.

So don't worry about anything else. If you happen to be in slavery in the literal physical sense. If your heart's been set free by the grace of God, that slavery is irrelevant.

Work within the context of your slavery to serve the Lord. If you can be free, well, Paul says that's great to use, use your freedom. But he says you were bought at a price.

Do not become the slaves of men. Whatever place we have in life, whether it's, you know, in the upper section of the theater or right down there in the bottom, whether we're in the upper class of society or the lower class, whether we're, you know, the working class or the aristocracy, none of that matters. Every man is a slave to sin, and any man who's freed by Christ is truly liberated, regardless of his position in society.

And he's to use his position not for his own gratification or benefit, but he's now to use his position for the Lord, to glorify the Lord. Do not be the slaves of men. Now concerning virgins, Paul is going to address young women.

He said, I have no commandment from the Lord, yet I give my judgment as one whom the Lord in his mercy has made trustworthy. I suppose, therefore, that this is good because of the present distress, that it is good for a man to remain as he is. So the present distress, Paul would be referring to there, would just be the general opposition that people will face in the world as a Christian.

We must always remember that we'll never be popular in the world as Christians. There will always be some form of opposition to you simply because you're a Christian. If it's not visible, if it's not tangible, if it's not something that you can actually put a finger on, it'll still be there.

It'll be invisible, untangible, but it's there. You know it's there, don't you? There might not be any human being involved in the opposition you're experiencing, but you have a conflict that goes on in your mind. You have just sometimes a general sense that there's something lurking over you.

That's the opposition that we face. It's persistent. The present distress is that opposition.

So it's good that a man remain as he is. Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife.

So if you're married, be content there. If you're unmarried, be content there. When Paul said, do not seek a wife, I don't think he's saying that we can't desire to be married.

I think what he's saying is simply what Jesus said, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and everything else will be added to you. There are some of you here that are single that desire to be married. Let me give you a tip.

Don't go looking for someone to marry. Inevitably, you'll find the wrong person and then you'll regret it. Seek the Lord and God will bring the right person to you in his time.

Marrying the wrong person be a very, very unpleasant experience. And, you know, Christian people have done that because of impatience, because I want this now. I'm tired of being single.

I'm lonely and I need a companion. And then instead of waiting on the Lord or seeking God's counsel, instead of being patient, they rush out and jump into a relationship and then they find that it wasn't what they thought it was going to be. So the emphasis here, I believe, is is that we're to seek the Lord.

And if God wills, he will provide the spouse for us. So he says, but even if you do marry, you have not sinned. Again, going back to the ascetic mentality that had crept in, Paul says, no, it's not a sin to marry.

It doesn't mean that you're less spiritually if you marry. There's so much positive information given to us in the scriptures on marriages. Proverbs tells us he finds a wife, finds a good thing in favor from the Lord.

Paul speaks glowingly of marriage in Ephesians, chapter five. So there there is absolutely nothing negative about being married. It was God himself who looked at man and said, it is not good that man be alone.

Marriage was ordained by God. So Paul is emphasizing that. But even if you do marry, you have not sinned.

And if a young lady, a virgin, marries, she is not sinned. Nevertheless, such will have trouble in the flesh. But I would spare you.

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. 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, and those who use this world is not misusing it for the form of this world is passing away. You see, Paul says.

I want to spare you of the trouble, just the practical difficulty that you will have in this world that's opposed to Christ. As as a married person, that that's his motivation. Now, we're going to talk about this at length next time, but Paul Paul says the time is short.

And and what Paul is doing there, as is so often the case in the New Testament, he's reminding us Christian people of something that the average person never thinks of. That time is not going on endlessly, that. There is.

A climactic point in history where everything that man is known is going to come to an abrupt halt. Christians are the only people that think in those terms, you go out and survey the average person and they just think of life in the world and everything just going on endlessly, it's just going to keep going and keep going and keep going. That's not true.

And what Paul is wanting to bring back to the forefront of their minds is the fact that there is an appointed time when life, as we know it. Is going to cease. That, of course, is when Christ comes and sets up his kingdom.

But as I said, we'll get into that in more detail next time. Verse 32, but I want you to be without care. He was unmarried, cares for the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord, but he who is married cares about the things of the world, how he may please his wife.

This is just practical advice based on experience. And everyone who's married will, I think, agree with the apostle. It's absolutely true.

Before I was married, I had all kinds of freedom to serve the Lord. I could go anywhere, do anything I wanted, didn't have to let anybody know I was coming or going, didn't have any responsibilities. I didn't have anything like that.

Absolute freedom. But then, of course, when you're married, you have obligations. And so it will inevitably limit to some degree your freedom and what you're able to do.

But then, of course, when God has a plan for you to be married. Then he works all of those things. His will, he works it all into the context of your life as a married person.

So he says there is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman care cares about the things of the Lord that she may be holy, both in body and spirit. But she was married, cares about the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper that you may serve the Lord without distraction. You see, in Paul's mind. The greatest thing was to serve the Lord unencumbered.

Without the distraction that comes from married life. But yet he recognizes that some people are gifted to do that and others aren't. He's just expressing his own feelings about it all.

But if any man thinks he is behaving improperly toward his virgin, if she has passed the flower of youth and thus it must be, let him do as he wishes. He does not sin. Let them marry.

Nevertheless, he who stands steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but has power over his own will and is so determined in his heart that he will keep his virgin does well. So then he who gives her in marriage does well, but he who does not give her in marriage does better just in the sense of. Practically being able to serve God, it's easier to serve God as a single person.

If you have the gift of celibacy, if you don't have the gift of celibacy as a single person, it's difficult to serve God because you're distracted. You're looking at every other single person wondering, is that the one for me? And then you've got a whole list of distractions yourself. So you see, it all really comes down to the gift.

What is your gift? Has God gifted you to live singly? Then you're not going to be distracted by wishing you were married. God's giving you the gift to be married. You're not going to be distracted by wishing you were single.

So 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. But she is happier if she remains as she is, according to my judgment.

That seems to imply that Paul knew by experience, perhaps he was a widower. And now he says, and I think also I have the spirit of God. So he's been giving his opinion on on some of these things.

And and as we look at these things, as Paul's opinion, what we would conclude, I think, is that these are biblical guidelines rather than biblical mandates. And that there is there's leeway for us to, you know, work through it ourselves personally and find out exactly what is best for us. But then Paul concludes the whole thing by reminding them that he's speaking as an apostle and he's speaking by inspiration of the spirit and the counsel he's giving is good, godly counsel.

So, as he said earlier, each person has their own gift. Those who are married need to make sure they do not allow their married life or their family life to become so cluttered that it keeps them from serving God. Those that are called to be single, then, of course, they need to dedicate themselves singly to service to the Lord.

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