

Session 8: 1 Corinthians 7

A Study of The Corinthians' Life-Style and Life's Loves

From chapter 7 to the end of chapter 15, Paul writes and tries to deal with a set of problems concerning with which the Corinthian Church had written to him...asking his advice. He begins the section (Chapter 7:1.... "In regard to what you wrote about"....or "In reference to your letter..."

Chapter 7....Advice on Marriage:

1 Corinthians 7:1-2, *"Now for the matters you wrote about: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." ² But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband."*

Advice to those who think that Christians should not marry at all.

- **Paul's advice:**

- ✓ *Remember where you are living; remember that you are living in Corinth where you cannot even walk along the street without temptation rearing its head at you. Remember your own physical constitution and the healthy instincts which nature has given you. You will be far better to marry than to fall into sin.*
- ✓ *Examine yourself and choose that way of life in which you can best live the Christian life.*

1 Corinthians 7:3-7, *"The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. ⁴ The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife. ⁵ Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. ⁶ I say this as a concession, not as a command. ⁷ I wish that all of you were as I am. But each of you has your own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that."*

Advice to those who urge that even those who are married should abstain from all sexual relations with each other.

- **Paul's advice:**

- ✓ *Marriage is a partnership*
- ✓ *The husband cannot act independently of the wife, nor the wife of the husband.*
- ✓ *They must always act together.*

- ✓ *The husband must never regard the wife simply as a means of self-gratification.*
- ✓ *The whole marriage relationship, both in its physical and spiritual sides, is something in which both are to find their gratification and the highest satisfaction of all their desires.*

1 Corinthians 7:8-9, “Now to the unmarried^a and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I do. ⁹ But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

Advice to the unmarried and to widows.

- **Paul’s advice:**

(Understand that Paul felt that the Lord’s 2nd coming was imminent...could happen any day)

- ✓ *You are free to marry.*
- ✓ *They would be better off by remaining unmarried....But,*
- ✓ *Don’t court temptation, not to attempt a situation which would be for them dangerous.*
- ✓ *If they have a nature naturally passionate, please feel free to marry.*

(Paul was always sure that no one could lay down a course of action for everyone. It all depends on the person involved).

1 Corinthians 7:10-11, “To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. ¹¹ But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.”

Advice to those who think that married people should separate.

Problem: There was a misunderstanding about our bodies

- ❖ *Our bodies are the temple of the Lord...Don’t do anything to defile it.*
- ❖ *Our bodies are going back to dust when we die, why is it important to maintain or restrain it.*

- **Paul’s Advice:**

- ✓ *Paul forbids divorce on the ground that Jesus forbade it. (Mark 10:9; Luke 16:18)*
- ✓ *If, however, there is a separation, he forbids remarriage.*

This seems like a hard doctrine, but in Corinth with its laxity and promiscuity, it was better to keep the standard so high that no taint of loose-living could enter the Church.

1 Corinthians 7:12-17, “To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. ¹³ And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. ¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. ¹⁵ But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. ¹⁶ How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?” ¹⁷ Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.”

Advice to those who think that if the marriage is one in which one of the partners in Christian and one a pagan, it should be broken and dissolved.

One spouse's advice: Tie the heathen up in a bed sheet when he is asleep, beat him half to death with the broom in which he has made you clean up his messes....and then leave.....just kidding!
Really....the heathens complained that many marriages were broken up because one of the partners became a Christian. Mixed marriages produced problems.

Paul's Advice:

- ✓ **If the two partners could agree to live together, by all means let them do so.**
- ✓ **If they wish to separate and found living together intolerable, let them separate...because the Christian was never meant to be a slave.**

Note: This does not release a Christian to marry someone else; Paul was advocating separation, not divorce. There are some avenues where divorce is allowed (i.e. adultery).

1 Corinthians 7:18-24, “Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised. ¹⁹ Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts. ²⁰ Each person should remain in the situation they were in when God called them. ²¹ Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, do so. ²² For the one who was a slave when called to faith in the Lord is the Lord's freed person; similarly, the one who was free when called is Christ's slave. ²³ You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of human beings. ²⁴ Brothers and sisters, each person, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation they were in when God called them.”

Instruction to live the Christian life in whatever state (situation) you happen to be.

- **Paul's Advice:**

- ✓ *Be a Christian where you are.*
- ✓ *Paul insisted that the function of Christianity was not to give a man a new life, but to make his old life new*
- ✓ *(Let the Jew remain a Jew; let the Gentile remain a Gentile)...the difference should be the kind of life he lived after accepting Christianity.*
- ✓ *Slave or free, a man is a slave of Christ because Christ bought us with a price. We are to live life and do Christ's commandments.*

You might note: Paul's advice was from his own intellect and speculation. This is not to say that his advice was not of God, but his advice was just that...advice! Since Paul was constantly living for Christ and prayed consistently and reverently for wisdom, chances are his advice was well thought out and with much spiritual wisdom given by God. Always note that when the Bible tells someone that he "should" do something or that he "may" do something to help solve a problem, it is not a commandment ...but a suggested and "prayed through" answer to a question or problem.

When God commands or demands something or Paul gives a specific command of God, there should be no question of Paul's advice. The Word of God is infallible, with no flaws. Jesus Christ...the same yesterday, today, and forever!

1 Corinthians 7:25...36-38, " ²⁵Now about virgins: I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy... ³⁶ If anyone is worried that he might not be acting honorably toward the virgin he is engaged to, and if his passions are too strong^[a] and he feels he ought to marry, he should do as he wants. He is not sinning. They should get married. ³⁷ But the man who has settled the matter in his own mind, who is under no compulsion but has control over his own will, and who has made up his mind not to marry the virgin—this man also does the right thing. ³⁸ So then, he who marries the virgin does right, but he who does not marry her does better."

Advice regarding virgins (the unmarried)

- ✓ ***Self-discipline is an excellent thing.***
- ✓ ***Don't make an unnatural thing of your religion.***

Such as, monks, hermits and the nuns.....Christianity was never meant to abolish normal life; it was meant to glorify God in all things.

- ✓ **Don't make an agony of your religion.**

Remember:

No man should be ashamed of:

- ❖ *the body God gave him,*
- ❖ *the heart God put into him,*
- ❖ *the instincts that, by God's creation, dwell within him.*

Christianity will teach us, not how to eliminate those passions, but how to use them in such a way that passion is pure and human love the most ennobling thing in all God's world.

1 Corinthians 7:26-35, "Because of the present crisis, I think that it is good for a man to remain as he is. ²⁷ Are you pledged to a woman? Do not seek to be released. Are you free from such a commitment? Do not look for a wife. ²⁸ But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this. ²⁹ What I mean, brothers and sisters, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they do not; ³⁰ those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; ³¹ those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away. ³² I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord. ³³ But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife—³⁴ and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband. ³⁵ I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.

Exhortation that nothing should interfere with our concentration on serving Christ...because time is short and Jesus will be coming soon.

- **Paul's advice:**

- ✓ Since Christ's return is imminent, don't let anything stand in the way of pleasing Christ.
(Paul in this chapter of his life, thought marriage as the 2nd best.....later in life, he saw marriage as the loveliest relationship on earth (Ephesians).

Remember this: Treat every day as it was your last one to give of yourself to others....your spouse, your family, friends and loved ones. Jesus is coming soon....let us live like we expect and long for His coming!

1 Corinthians 7:39-40, “A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord. ⁴⁰ In my judgment, she is happier if she stays as she is—and I think that I too have the Spirit of God.”

Advise to those who wish to remarry.

- **Paul’s advice:**

- ✓ Marriage is a relationship which should be broken only by death.
- ✓ A 2nd marriage is perfectly allowable, but Paul would rather see the widow stay a widow (speaking as if Jesus was coming back tomorrow...soon).
- ✓ One condition Paul lays down—it must be a marriage in the Lord (two Christians).

The highest love comes when two people love each other and their love is sanctified by a common love of Christ. They not only live together, they pray together, worship together....making it a continual act of worship to God.