

“BUT EVEN IF SHE DEPART”

1Cor.7:10,11

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The subject of marriage, divorce and remarriage is one of the biggest spiritual issues of our time because our society is afflicted with and suffering from sinful attitudes and philosophies of worldly people that destroy marriages as God ordained them.
2. As Bible believers who hate and abhor such evil, we should be concerned with doing everything we can, in harmony with God’s revealed will, to help every marriage last “until death do us part.”
3. According to both O.T. and N.T. marriage as God ordained it is to be monogamous and permanent. God hates “putting away” according to Mal.2:16. It is **NOT** God’s will that man should “put asunder” (either by separation or divorce) what “God has joined together” in marriage.
4. Of course, we understand from Mt.5:31,32 and Mt.19:9 that God allows the innocent spouse to divorce the guilty spouse for the cause of fornication and even to marry another if the innocent spouse so desires.
5. Furthermore, fornication on the part of a guilty spouse is the only scriptural cause allowed for divorce of a spouse whether or not one intends to marry another, or ever marries another.
6. Divorce, or even permanent separation, for any other cause is a violation of God’s will according to Mt.5:31,32; 19:6,9; Rom.7:2,3; 1Cor.7:2-5,39.
7. In spite of the plain truth taught in these passages, there are those, even among brethren in Christ, who contend that 1Cor.7:10,11 allows or permits separation, even divorce, for any cause, without sin, as long as the one departing does not marry another.
8. Let’s see if this is the case!

II. DISCUSSION

A. FIRST, NOTE AND MAKE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT 1COR. 7:10,11 – BOTH VERSES – ARE SAYING.

1. First, Paul says this is what the Lord says to the married, V.10a.
2. The Lord says, “Let **NOT** the wife **depart** from her husband,” V.10b.
 - a. The word “depart” is CHORIZO -- -- kho-rid’-zo, the same word as in Vv.11a,15a, meaning “to separate oneself, to

depart from, put asunder, Mt.19:6; Mk.10:9; to leave a husband or wife: of divorce, 1Cor.7:10,11,15.” – Thayer, 674.

3. The Lord says, “But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband...,” V.11a.
 - a. NKJV: “But even if she depart”
 - b. Again the word “depart” is CHORIZO as discussed in V.10b.
4. She is forbidden to separate herself from, put asunder, leave, or divorce her husband, according to V.10. Cf. Mt.5:31,32; 19:3-6,9; Rom.7:2,3.
5. But according to V.11, if she does separate herself from, put asunder, or divorce her husband, then, as a consequence of that she must remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband!
6. Question: Is this permissive? Or is it introducing the possibility of one violating the command of V.10?

B. SOME REASONS WHY THE EXPRESSION “BUT AND IF SHE DEPART, LET HER REMAIN UNMARRIED” CAN’T BE PERMISSIVE AS SOME BRETHERN CONTEND.

1. That is, some reasons why this is not giving her permission or allowing her to separate from her husband or divorce him for any cause without sin.
2. In the first place, it can’t be permissive because it would mean the Lord is here contradicting himself. For in Mt.5:31,32 and Mt.19:6,9 he said there is only one reason for divorce without sin – that of fornication – and here he contradicts himself by saying there is another – that one spouse may divorce another for any cause without sin.
3. In the next place, it can’t be permissive because Paul, in this very context, would be teaching contradictory doctrines.
 - a. For in Vv.2-5 he denied husband and wife the scriptural right of permanent separation.
 - b. Then here in Vv.10,11, if this is permissive as some contend, he contradicts himself by teaching them they should not do it in V.10, but if they did it anyway it would be permissible in V.11!
 - c. Then he turns around in V.39 and contradicts himself again by saying, “The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth.” Cf. Rom.7:2,3.
 - (1) In light of what some brethren contend, which time did he really mean what he said?
 - (2) Then, can we depend on anything he says?

4. Furthermore, it can't be permissive because four times in four consecutive verse (count them) he says:
 - a. V.10: "Let **not** the wife depart from her husband"
 - b. V.11: "let **not** the husband put away his wife"
 - c. V.12: "let him **not** put her away"
 - d. V.13: "let her **not** leave him"
 - (1) Note this: Doesn't it seem strange that in four consecutive verses he would forbid it, and yet in one of those verses permit it or allow it for any cause?
 - (2) Does it make sense that after forbidding it four times in four consecutive verses, he would then introduce the possibility that the command not to do it might be violated without sin?
5. Take note of this to see what Paul actually does, or to see the argument he makes in 1Cor.7:10,11 (NKJV)
 - a. Paul first gives a **COMMAND**: "A wife is not to depart from her husband," V.10b.
 - b. Second, he introduces the **POSSIBILITY** that the command might be violated: "But even if she depart," V.11a.
 - c. Third, he gives **further positive instruction** that apply if an when, i.e., in the event the first command is violated: "Let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband."
 - (1) Think! Is Paul saying that if she violates the first command, which says not to do it, but follows God's further positive instructions after she does so, that she didn't really sin by violating the first command? Or that she had permission to do this in spite of the first command if she will remain unmarried?
 - (2) Is he teaching that following God's further positive instructions after violating one of his commands that that nullifies or takes away any guilt in violating the previous command?
6. Try that argument on 1Jno.2:1!
 - a. The language of 1Cor.7:11 is no more permissive than is the language of 1Jno.2:1!

B. LOOK AT OTHER PASSAGES WHERE THE CONSTRUCTION IS EITHER SIMILAR OR EXACTLY THE SAME AS THAT OF 1COR.7:10,11, WHICH HELP REFUTE THE FALSE PERMISSIVE ARGUMENT MADE ON 1COR.7:10,11.

(In each of the following passage, as in 1Cor.7:10,11, we have first A COMMAND, second A “BUT IF”, -- **violated by** --, third, POSITIVE INSTRUCTION.)

1. Rom.11:18.
 - a. First, the COMMAND: “Boast not against the branches”
 - b. Second, the “BUT IF”: **Violated by** – Boasting: “But if thou boast against the branches”
 - c. Third, further POSITIVE INSTRUCTION : “Remember...the root supports (bearest) you”
 - (1) Is it permissible for me; have I committed no sin by boasting against the branches, i.e., by violating the command to “Boast not against the branches,” as long as I follow the further positive instructions and remember that “the root supports” me?
2. Gal.5:14,15.
 - a. First, there is the COMMAND: “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself”
 - b. Second, there is the: “BUT IF” – **Violated by** – “if ye bite and devour one another”
 - c. Third, there is the further positive instruction: “take heed that ye be not consumed one of another”
 - (1) Is it permissible for me to “bite and devour” Christians – i.e. violate the command: “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,” as long as I am careful not to be consumed?
3. Jas.3:13,14.
 - a. First, there is the COMMAND: “show...his works with meekness of wisdom”
 - b. Second, there is the: “BUT IF” – the command – **Violated by** “having bitter envying and strife in your hearts”
 - c. Third, there is the further positive instruction: “glory not, and lie not against the truth.”
 - (1) Is it permissible for me to “have bitter envying and strife” in my heart in violation of the command to “show...works with meekness of wisdom” so long as I don’t glory in it or lie against the truth?
4. Each one of these passages is parallel in construction with that of 1Cor.7:10,11, and not one of them gives permission to violate the first command.
 - a. And I know of no one who will so argue that they do.

- b. Neither does “But even if she depart” of 1Cor.7:10,11!
- c. Why, then, do so many argue that 1Cor.7:10,11 is permissive, while denying that these passages of parallel construction are not permissive?
- d. We wonder! Do you suppose it could be because of emotion, not law?

III. CONCLUSION

1. There is no such thing as one passage giving permission to violate the command given in another passage!
2. 1Cor.7:10,11 does not offer another reason for divorce than the one give by Jesus in Mt.5:32 and Mt.19:9.
3. 1Cor.7:11 is not permissive. It is simply introducing the possibility that the command of V.10 might be violated, and is stating the consequences concerning the future marital status of the one so doing.

(For the argument based on Rom.11:18; Gal.5:14,15 and Jas.3:13,14 – passages of parallel construction with 1Cor.7:10,11-- used in Section “B” of this study, credit is due Steve Klein, as published in “The Instructor,” Vol.25,No.1, 1988, published by the East Albertville church of Christ, Albertville, Alabama, edited by Carol R. Sutton.)