

THOUGHT PROVOKING TRUTHS TAUGHT IN 1COR. 7

I. INTRODUCTION

1. 1Cor.7 is one of the chapters in 1Cor. where Paul started to answer questions the Corinthians had written to him, v.1a.
 - a. The various questions raised (at least some of them) are generally introduced by the phrase “now concerning”, as seen in 7:1,25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1.
2. What he says in v.2b about it not being good for a man to touch a woman must be qualified by and understood in the light of the circumstances of the “present distress” that he mentions in v.26.
 - a. This “present distress” they were facing as Christians made it inadvisable to take on further obligations, especially those brought upon a man who begins to organize a family and the added pressures such would put upon him.
 - b. Therefore Paul’s advice was that it would be better to remain just as they were, and not take upon themselves the sacred and binding obligations of married life.
 - (1) To remain single if unmarried.
 - (2) If married, seek not be loosed, vv.8,25-27.
 - c. However, the marriage relationship is the Lord’s holy, ordained, means of meeting and satisfying the sexual desires of the flesh, and if anyone cannot contain, have complete control over, his or her sexual passions in resisting temptation to fornication, then let them marry.
 - (1) If they marry “they have not sinned.”
 - (2) For “it is better to marry than to burn,” or “to be inflamed or consumed with sexual desire,” vv.8,9,28a.
 - (3) One is not any less spiritual because he chooses to marry.
 - (4) Nor is one required to marry if he or she chooses not to.
 - d. “Nevertheless (due to the present distress,v.26) such (those that marry) shall have trouble in the flesh (in the body): but I (wish to) spare you (these troubles by advising you not to marry while present conditions prevail), v.28b.
 - e. Therefore, some principles herein discussed were not intended for universal application, but were limited to and given in light of “the present distress” that faced the Corinthians at that time.
 - f. On the other hand, Paul included some teaching on other matters in the chapter that are of universal application. It’s to the latter we shall give our attention in this series of lessons on 1Cor.7.

3. The following are some of the thought provoking truths taught in 1Cor.7 that are of universal application.
 - a. Pre-marital and or extra-marital sex is a sin, V.2.
 - b. Permanent, even prolonged, marital separation is a sin, Vv.2-5.
 - c. Divorce is denied, Vv.10-13.
 - d. In the marriage bond the believer is not the unbeliever's slave, Vv.12-16.
 - e. Man's proper behavior toward his virgin, Vv.36-38.
 - f. The widow's liberty to marry: Only in the Lord," Vv.39,40.

II. DISCUSSION

A. PRE-MARITAL AND OR EXTRA-MARITAL SEX IS A SIN, V.2. Cf. 1Cor.5:1.

1. Another way of saying it is: Sex before marriage and or sex with one other than one's own spouse is sin.
2. It is all too common, even among God's people, that we hear of some couples that are not married who have had sexual relations.
 - a. In some cases, we learn of it because of a pregnancy.
 - b. In other cases, we learn of it because they have no shame. For some times no effort is made to hide the sin.
3. A number of factors may explain why this happens to so many. Among other things:
 - a. Society encourages it in various ways. What society as a whole accepts usually finds its way into the body of Christ!
 - b. Celebrities who often serve as role models have no shame in sexual relations and having babies before they are married.
 - c. TV and movies leave little to the imagination (including many bedroom scenes in movies that Christians watch).
 - d. Some of today's music is not only suggestive, but at times is explicit.
 - e. Ignorance of the truth; of the facts; desire for attention; deception, etc. contribute to the problem.
 - f. One boy said to his father at Grady, Ark.: "Daddy, the girls are now asking the boys!"
4. This is not an effort to kick those who are down, or to deliberately embarrass one who has made such a mistake and paid a tremendous price for it.
 - a. No one has more compassion than I for such an one when they have repented and gone on to overcome and make something of their life.

- b. Especially those who have returned to the Lord and are now faithfully serving him.
- c. I know some who have done so and are doing so.
- 5. But in spite of such things and, moreover, because of such things, this subject must be preached on – plainly and forcefully.
 - a. There was a time when one would not dare speak so plainly, using such plain terms in a public way.
 - b. When I was a boy, the word “pregnant” was not even mentioned in mixed company!
- 6. In spite of all these factors and the fuzzy thinking on the subject, and even many denials to the contrary, any and all sex before marriage and or sex with one other than one’s own spouse is a sin.
 - a. It is a sin because our texts says that sex with one other than one’s own wife or husband is fornication, or illicit, unlawful sexual intercourse, 1Cor.7:2; Cf. 1Cor.5:1; 1Jno.3:4.
 - b. It was a sin in O.T. times, for therein God forbade it, Exo.20:14: “Thou shalt not commit adultery.”
 - (1) Those who were guilty were to be put to death, Lev.20:10.
 - (a) This lets us know the seriousness of it!
 - (2) Job 31:11 calls it “an heinous crime; yea, it is an iniquity to be punished by the judges.”
 - c. In the N.T. God’s view of the act has not changed, not the punishment for the guilty lessened. For he says those who are guilty of either fornication or adultery are lost and can’t enter heaven unless they repent, 1Cor.6:9-11; Gal.5:19-21; Lk.13:3; Ac.17:30,31.
- 7. Remember this: Sex itself is not sinful.
 - a. Many in the past have held, perhaps some even now hold, the view that even though married, that that intimacy was some how “tainted with sin”.
 - b. Not so! Heb.13:4: “Let marriage be had in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled...”
 - (1) The bed (sexual relations) within scriptural marriage is honorable and undefiled.
 - (2) But, the fornicators (pre-marital) and adulterers (extra-marital) God will condemn.
 - c. We should learn and fully accept that God himself has created us sexual beings (male and female) and that marriage is blessed of God for this purpose – that sexual

relations were and are divinely authorized within and limited to the marriage bed, Gen.1:27,28; 2:21-24; Mk.19:4-6.

(1) Within the marriage bed sex is high and holy and serves both God and man well.

(2) Procreation is not the only purpose of the marriage bed, Prov.5:15-19; 1Cor.7:2-5.

7. Some things pre-marital and or extra-marital sex does.

a. Condemns and keeps one out of heaven if un-repented of, Heb.13:4b; 1Cor.6:9,10; Gal.5:19-21.

b. Destroys one's reputation, for Job 31:12 describes it as "a fire that consumeth to destruction..." And Prov.5:9a refers to such an one as giving "thine honor unto others".

c. Destroys the honest, self-respecting man's self-esteem; a man such as David, who said, "my sin is always before me," Psa.51:3,4; Cf. Psa.32:1-5. Sin is so deceptive (Heb.3:13) that good men and women can get caught up in it, Rom.7:7-11; Gal.6:1.

d. Treats others cruelly; for the immoral woman of Prov.5 is called the "cruel one" in v.9.

(1) Why? To defile another and endanger their soul, which sin does, is indeed cruel!

(2) Yet, men often don't think sin is so bad! But God does!

e. Brings the wrath of God upon the one guilty of the sin. Col.3:5 says fornication is one of the members that must be put to death. Then V.6 says, "For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience."

8. The Bible sounds many timely warnings about things that lead to pre-marital and or extra-marital sex.

a. Forgetting what God says, Prov.2:16,17. This speaks of the strange (immoral) woman which:

(1) "Flattereth with her words"

(2) "Forsaketh the guide of her youth"

(3) "Forgetteth the covenant of her God"

(4) Cf. Jer.2:32; 13:25; Psa.106:21; Hos.8:14.

b. Being careless with the opposite sex, 2Sam.11:1-5; Prov.5:3-8; 7:6-27.

(1) Bro. W. Curtis Porter's advice to me as a young preacher.

c. Flirting and falling victim to flattery, Prov.6:24-29.

- d. Looking with lust, Mt.5:27,28; Cf. David's looking, 2Sam. 11:2,4. See Job 31:1.
- e. Neglecting the duties of the marriage bed, 1Cor.7:2-5.

CONCLUSION:

1. God says, "Flee fornication," 1Cor.6:18.
2. God says it will keep you out of heaven, 1Cor.6:9,10; Gal.5:19-21.
3. God says sex in the scriptural marriage bed is high, holy and honorable; but that sex outside the marriage bed is whoremongering and adultery, and that all such shall have their part in the lake of fire, Heb.13:4; Rev.21:8.
4. When we as a local congregation tolerate such things, or allow this to happen without proper discipline, even withdrawal of fellowship when it continues between two members, then we are failing our duty; we are sinning by condoning that which is sin in our fellowship!
5. We are failing to do what 2Th.3:6 demands of us!

B. PERMANENT, EVEN PROLONGED, MARITAL SEPARATION IS A SIN, 1COR.7:2-5.

1. What is authorized and or commanded in these verses?
 - a. Marriage between a man and a woman, or a male and a female, v.2; cf. Vv.9,27,28a.
 - (1) Cf. Gen.2:24; Mt.19:4-6.
 - (2) Emphasize "male and female" or "man and woman" or "husband and wife".
 - b. Sexual intercourse in marriage, vv.3,4.
 - (1) "Due benevolence" is to be rendered by each spouse.
 - (2) Each spouse has permanent conjugal rights to the use of the other's body in the marriage bed. Cf. Heb.13:4a
 - (3) Naturally, this text is speaking of spouses that are physically and mentally able to perform.
 - c. Temporary deprivation, or the right of the husband and wife to mutually agree to deprive one another of this power over the other's body, or to agree to temporarily withhold this right one from another, v.5.
 - (1) V.5 provides for ***the one exception*** to this rule prohibiting deprivation of the marriage bed.
 - (2) The conditions for the one exception are three in number and are as follows:

- (a) Mutual “consent” of the spouses.
 - (1) We say *mutual consent* because neither has independent power over his or her own body in the marriage bond.
- (b) “For a time”
 - (1) That is, the abstinence is to be temporary.
 - (2) The amount of time involved is a liberty.
 - (3) Obviously, as the context necessarily implies, it is not a long period of time, or an indefinite period of time.
 - (4) It is to be a mutually agreed upon time.
- (c) “That (in order that) you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer.”
 - (1) This states the reason or the purpose for which the partners mutually agree to abstain from the marriage bed “for a time”.
 - (2) Deprivation or abstinence for another purpose does not meet the stated conditions of the exception.
- (3) At the end of this temporary period of time, “come together again”
 - (a) “Come together again” is commanded!
 - (b) An ever present danger is cited as long as the abstinence from the marriage bed continues: “that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency” (or lack of control). Cf. 1Cor.7:7,8; 10:2.

2. What is prohibited or condemned in these verses?

- a. Sexual immorality, such as “fornication”, or “illicit, unlawful sexual intercourse,” v.2.
 - (1) That includes any form of sexual intercourse with male or female outside of scriptural marriage.
 - (2) For the verse says, “to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.”
 - (3) Though God ordained sexual intercourse between male and female, he limited it to the scriptural marriage bed, Gen.2:24; Mt.19:4-6; Heb.13:4.

- (4) God has never allowed mankind the license of sexual promiscuity, 1Cor.6:12-18; 2Cor.6:17-7:1.
 - (5) God's wrath and judgment of eternal punishment will come upon fornicators who die in their sins, Rom.1:18-32; 1Cor.6:9,10; Gal.5:19-21; Eph.5:3-6; Col.3:5,6; 1Tim.1:8-10; Rev.21:8.
- b. Defraudation or forced abstinence by one of the spouses in marriage for any period of time, v.5.
- (1) The KJV renders it: "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be..."
 - (2) The NKJV renders it: "Do not deprive one another except..."
 - (3) The NASV renders it: "Stop depriving one another, except..."
 - (4) However, the word "defraud" gives the accurate sense in showing that this deprivation is unlawful and sinful; it violates God's law. Cf. 1Jno.3:4.
 - (a) W.E. Vine, I, 287: DEFRAUD (apostereo), "signifies to rob, despoil, defraud," Mk.10:19; 1Cor.6:8; 7:5 (of that which is due to the condition of natural relationship of husband and wife.)
 - (b) Thayer, 68, agrees.
 - (5) The sinfulness of this act is in the fact that it is in violation of the marriage vow, 1Cor.7:4.
- c. Desertion of one's spouse, or legal separation, or permanent, even prolonged, marital separation, v.5.
- (1) Any authorized period of abstinence or sexual deprivation of the marriage bed authorized in this verse is temporary in nature and duration and by mutual consent.
 - (2) It is for a definite, stated, purpose.
 - (3) They are to "come together again"!!
 - (4) V.5 necessarily implies that conflict or marital problems of some kind may prove to be a need for a season of abstinence for fasting and prayer.
 - (a) But, abstinence is not the solution to the conflict.
 - (b) The solution implied is discipline wrought by fasting and prayer.

- (c) Even this approved abstinence does not mean leaving the home or moving out of the home!!
 - (5) Desertion, legal separation and any kind of permanent or prolonged separation are all necessarily forbidden by this verse, all of which are violations of the marriage vow, 1Cor.7:4; Mt.19:6; Rom.7:2; 1Cor.7:39; Cf. Deut.23:21,23; Psa.50:14; Eccl.5:4,5; Nah.1:15.
 - d. Furthermore, one does not have to leave the house or separate from a spouse to be guilty of defrauding one's spouse. One may continue to dwell with one's spouse and yet withhold one's self from one's spouse and be guilty of this sin!!
3. Reasons for regarding the separation of married couples as sinful, and therefore, disorderly.
- a. It is a violation of the marriage vow as suggested in the previous statement.
 - (1) Marriage as God ordained it is for life –“till death do us part” – with one exception, Mt.19:9.
 - b. It is contrary to the principle of sexual responsibility to render “due benevolence” in marriage and sets up the stumbling blocks of fornication and adultery, 1Cor.7:5; cf. Mt.5:32.
 - c. It usurps the pattern for resolving differences among believers, Mt.18:15-18; 1Cor.6:4,5.
 - d. When a legal separation is sought, it violates the principle against taking a brother to law, 1Cor.6:1-8.
 - e. It is behavior inconsistent with the admonition to suffer wrong under certain circumstances, Mt.5:38-41; Rom.12:18-21; 1Cor.6:7; 1Pet.2:19-23; Prov.20:22.
 - (1) “But that’s asking too much!”
 - (2) No, it’s not! What about the slave, required to suffer under a forward (harsh) master? 1Pet.2:18; Cf. Phlm.10-18.
 - f. It violates the “golden rule” and other passages, Mt.7:12; 1Cor.16:14 (1Cor.13:4-7); Eph.4:26,31-5:2.
 - g. It hurts, hinders, hampers and causes the church, the whole body of Christ, to suffer, 1Cor.12:26.
 - h. It often causes the party spirit to develop among members of the local church, with factions arising taking sides and

blaming others, bringing about evil surmising, slander, gossip, even division.

- i. It defiles worship, nullifies prayers, and renders forgiveness impossible, Mt.5:23,24; 1Pet.3:7; Mt.6:12,14,15.
- j. It denies the spirit of sacrifice and self-denial, by giving in to self-interest, enthroning self and dethroning the Lord, Mt.16:24-26; Gal.2:20; 1Cor.15:1-3; Phil.2:3-8.
 - (1) It is pure selfishness when two people, especially professed Christians, refuse to sit down and work out their differences and keep the marriage and home together!
- k. It unlawfully breaks up a family and denies the children the home – the family – both a mother and a father – to which they have a right, Eph.6:1-4; Tit.2:1-5; 2Cor.12:14b.

CONCLUSION:

1. There is no authority in 1Cor.7 or any other Bible passage for marital separation in the absence of fornication and divorce on the basis of the fornication of the guilty party by the innocent party.
2. There is condemnation of all such unscriptural marital separation as being sinful.
3. Those who do it are sinning, are lost now, and will be lost eternally if they do not repent and come together again!
4. The local church that allows the practice of such marital separation; that does not take the proper disciplinary action when such takes place among its members, is in violation of God's law, which means there is sin in the camp!
5. In view of the scriptural facts, no one can afford to ignore the sin – time will not heal the sin! Only repentance will do it!
6. Only proper disciplinary action will save the local church and hopefully the persons involved! Consider 2Th.3:6; 1Cor.5:1-13.

C. DIVORCE IS DENIED, 1COR.7:10-13

1. In v.10a note the ones addressed: “And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord...”
 - a. Paul in this context addresses the married in *general*; for what he commands applies across the board to: believer/believer; believer/unbeliever; unbeliever/unbeliever.
 - (1) This must be true because:
 - (a) God’s marriage law applies to both believers and unbelievers, Gen.2:18-24; M5.5:32; Mt.19:4-9; Mk.10:11,12; Lk.16:18 Cf. Jno.3:16, “whosoever”) Rom.7:1-3.
 - (b) The immediate context shows that what he teaches concerning divorce applies to both believers and unbelievers. Cf. 1Cor.7:13,14.
 - (2) It is pure assumption to insist that the teaching of these verses is to believers only.
 - b. To the married “I command”
 - (1) The original means “to command, order, or charge,” Thayer, 479.
 - (2) Thus, what follows is an apostolic order; it is not an optional thing.
 - (3) There is no liberty granted in these verses either to divorce or to separate!
 - c. “Yet not I, but the Lord”
 - (1) This phrase has one of two possible interpretations, both of which are consistent with the context.
 - (2) It is to be understood either as a means of distinguishing between what Paul grants as a liberty Vs. what he requires as law. Cf. 6-10.
 - (a) Vv.6-9 – “by permission” – meaning: something allowed but not commanded. “liberty is granted”
 - (b) While in v.10, something is commanded; no option; no liberty granted.
 - (3) Or, it is to be understood that Paul is referring to a command given previously by Christ Vs. one given only in this context pertaining to specific situations and consistent with the Lord’s commandment.
 - d. Either way, we have an apostle of Christ speaking by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (vv.25b,40b; 14:37), as

- c. V.12: "...let him not put her away (APHIEMI)."
 - d. V.13: "...let her not leave (APHIEMI) him."
 - e. How much plainer and how much more emphatic can it be stated?
 - (1) Let her not, and let him not, on any pretence, desert, leave, divorce her husband, or he his wife.
 - (2) Divorce is prohibited or forbidden; the privilege of divorce is denied; the Scriptures say: **DON'T DO IT!**
 - (3) Divorce is denied and in these verses it is not contingent upon whether or not remarriage is or is not contemplated by either party either at the present or in the future!
 - (4) The divorce is forbidden, **PERIOD!**
4. This is because marriage as ordained by God is for life – “till death do us part” – with divorce allowed for **ONE AND ONLY ONE REASON!**
- a. The permanency of marriage is declared by Jesus in Mt.19:4-6. Cf. Rom.7:2; 1Cor.7:39; Mal.2:16.
 - b. Mt.19:9 specifies the **ONE REASON**, and the only reason ,God permits divorce without committing sin, and that because the sin of fornication has been committed and is the reason for the innocent putting away the guilty.
 - c. Paul’s appeal to the Lord in this matter in 1Cor.7:10 is for the purpose of reinforcement and in direct allusion to the teaching of Jesus recorded in Mt.5:31,32; Mk.10:9-12.
 - d. Thus, in our text of 1Cor.7:10-13 is found God’s law on divorce for causes **OTHER THAN** fornication! It is forbidden, prohibited, denied!! It is a sin!!!
5. Now to a detailed examination of v.11a, what it says, what it means and what some claim it means in spite of its context.
- a. What it says: “But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband.”
 - (1) “Depart” (CHORIZO), “to put apart, to separate one’s self” or to divorce.
 - (2) “If she depart, let her remain unmarried, or...”
 - (3) “Depart” must mean “to divorce” because when she departs she is “unmarried”.
 - b. Some boldly, but erroneously, contend that the expression “but if she depart” is permissive – that it gives permission to depart or divorce, or allows it, or that divorce is here

approved and no sin is committed in divorcing, and that no sin is committed as long as they either remain unmarried or are reconciled to the former spouse.

- (1) This is a classic case of reading something into a verse that is not there; a classic case of eisegesis, instead of exegesis!
- c. The language of 1Cor.7:11 is no more permissive than is the language of 1Jno.2:1,2.
- (1) 1Jno.2:1,2 is a revealing parallel passage as far as permission being granted for sin – any type of sin – is concerned.
 - (2) In 1Jno.2:1,2, sin is the subject, and John prohibits it, saying: “...these things write I unto you, that ye sin not,” just as Paul or Jesus prohibited divorce in 1Cor. 7:10, by saying: “...Let not the wife depart from her husband.”
 - (3) Next, John says,” And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins...”
 - (a) Cf. what Paul said in 1Cor.7:11: “But and if she depart” with 1Jno.2:1: “and if any man sin”
 - (b) Neither statement is permissive or gives permission for anything.
 - (c) Both passages first prohibit something: one, “divorce”; the other, “sin”.
 - (d) Neither passage both prohibits and permits at the same time!
 - (1) All recognize this on 1Jno.2:1,2. Why not on 1Cor.7:10,11:
 - (2) Could it be because emotion enters the picture in 1Cor.7:10,11?
 - (4) Both passages instruct the disobedient – the one or ones that do what is first prohibited in the passage; neither passage gives permission to the disobedient to do what has been prohibited!
- d. What is the point of 1Cor.7:11a?
- (1) It is a parenthetical statement which introduces what is to be done if or when, or in case, one does divorce in violation of the prohibition of v.10.

- (a) Read vv.10,11 without the parenthetical statement.
- (2) This parenthetical statement simply recognizes that one may or might disobey the Lord's command in v.10, just as 1Jno.2:1 does (in which case, that one sins, 1Jn.3:4), and states the only two options open to that one if he or she does depart or divorce.
 - (a) "Remain unmarried"
 - (b) "Or be reconciled to her husband"
 - (c) If the latter is possible, then repent and be reconciled.
 - (d) If the latter is possible but refused by the departing one, then she must remain unmarried and remain in sin – then the church must take action!
 - (e) Even if the latter is not possible because the one put away refuses reconciliation, then both are in sin – church must take action!
- (3) Certainly, Paul does not lay down the law of the Lord against divorce in v.10, and then contradict himself and nullify that law in v.11 by giving permission to do what he explicitly forbids in v.10!
- (4) The whole context is non-permissive: V.5; V.10; V.11; V.12; V.13.
- e. By saying in v.11a, "remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband," Paul is not giving permission to choose between *two equally desirable states, conditions or alternatives*, as some have claimed.
 - (1) This text does not even hint that as a possibility; it is mere assumption on the part of some seeking (for whatever reason) to find justification for divorce for causes other than for fornication.
 - (2) In fact, this whole context denies one the right to choose as one pleases between two equally desirable alternatives with no sin involved.
 - (3) Repentance (and restoration when and where possible) are absolutely necessary when one sins if one is to be forgiven.

- (4) In this text and context, if either separation or divorce has taken place, reconciliation is required if that is possible.
- (5) “Or” anticipates the fact that reconciliation may not be possible because that involves the will and requires the cooperation of both parties in the marriage.
- (6) If reconciliation is not possible, she must remain unmarried for life!

CONCLUSION

1. V.15 will not help the one advocating that a believer may, for a cause other than fornication, divorce; for it says nothing about the believer departing – only of the unbeliever departing.
 - a. To be dealt with In the next lesson in the series on 1Cor.7.
2. Even extended marital separation is forbidden or denied in vv.2-5.
3. Divorce is forbidden or denied in vv.10-13.
4. Thus, either or both are forbidden or denied in 1Cor.7:2-13, the very place some contend gives permission, under certain circumstances, for divorce for causes other than fornication.
5. Neither indefinite separation nor divorce for any cause except fornication is a scriptural option for marital problems.
6. The scriptural evidence offered in this lesson proves that divorce for any cause other than fornication is denied! It is a sin!
7. People cannot afford to do it! The local church cannot afford to tolerate it with a lack of proper discipline!
8. One has said, “I know there are other scriptural reasons allowing divorce, but I don’t know what they are!”
9. The real solution to preventing adulterous marriages is to prevent unscriptural divorces!
10. If we continue to teach that divorce is not a sin, that only the marrying of another after a divorce is, we will continue to aid and abet adulterous marriages.

D. IN THE MARRIAGE BOND, THE BELIEVER IS NOT THE UNBELIEVER'S SLAVE, 1COR.7:12-16

(These notes are from my old sermon "1Cor.7:15 – 'Not Under Bondage'", and from pages 16 through 24 of this series on 1Cor.7)

E. GENERAL ADVICE CONCERNING THE MARRIAGE OF VIRGINS UNDER "THE PRESENT DISTRESS," 1COR.7:25-35.

1. From v.25 through v.38 Paul's inspired instructions pertain to the marriage of virgins.
 - a. However his advice to virgins in vv.25-35, though inspired, was not intended for universal application, but was limited to and given in light of the "present distress" mentioned in v.26.
 - b. But the instructions given to virgins in vv.36-38 are of universal application.
 - c. The truth of this shall appear as our study progresses.
 - d. Our emphasis in this study of vv.25-38 shall be on vv.36-38, which will be the 2nd phase of our study, which we shall title "Paul's Specific Instructions Concerning Man's Proper Behavior Toward His Virgin, Or His Own Virginity."
2. Therefore, before studying vv.36-38, we notice first, vv.25-35 and his general advice concerning the marriage of virgins under the "present distress," the distressful circumstances they were then facing that made such advice important, and which advice leads us to that given in vv.36-38.
 - a. According to v.25, evidently this was another subject on which the church at Corinth had asked instructions from Paul.
 - (1) According to v.25, take note of the ***character*** and ***form*** of the "judgment," advice or instructions he offers to virgins, or to the unmarried, in vv.25-35.
 - (2) His "judgment" or decision is not a mere expression of his own private opinion as a man.
 - (3) It's a contrast between a direct statement of Jesus and Paul's own ***inspired*** comments.
 - (a) The last part of v.25 leaves no doubt about that.
 - (b) Cf. v.40; See 1Cor.14:37.
 - (4) It's a difference in ***form***, not a difference as to ***authority***.

- (5) The instruction is in the form and character of inspired advice, due to circumstances, not that of imperative obligation involved in commandment.
- (6) What does the context suggest or reveal to us with reference to the word “virgin”?
 - (a) Does it apply to females only or to both male and female?
 - (b) It’s important that we see this, especially when we get to vv.36-38.
 - (c) Now check vv.8,9,26,27,32,33 and his use of both male and female as unmarried or as virgins
- b. According to v.26a the bases for his “judgment” or advice in the whole of vv.26-35 is the “present distress”.
- c. His advice is as follows due to the “present distress”:
 - (1) V.26: “I suppose therefore that this is good...I say, that it is good for a man so to be”.
 - (a) “It is good” Cf. V.1.
 - (b) “So to be” (to remain as they are at present)
 - (2) His further application and explanation of v.26 is found in vv.27,28.
 - (a) V.27
 - (1) “Bound” (deo): “to bind by a legal or moral tie, as marriage” – stay bound; stay married; don’t divorce.
 - (2) “Loosed”: “to disengage, the opposite of bound or deo”; it “speaks of a single man, whether he has already had a wife or has not yet married,” Thayer, 384.
 - (b) V.28 contains additional evidence that this instruction for virgins or the unmarried is simply advisory in view of the “present distress”.
 - (1) However, v.28 shows that his discouragement of marriage under the circumstances is sufficiently justified by its consequences.
 - (2) If you marry you shall experience “trouble in the flesh” (in the body).

- (3) “But I (wish to) spare you (these troubles by advising you not to marry while present conditions prevail).
- (3) Still additional justification for his advice is offered in vv.29-31a
- (4) V.31b, an explanatory reason for his previous statements in vv.29-31a: for the present fashion, shape, manner of life, actions of this world (of humanity) etc is temporary. Cf. Psa.39:6; Mt.6:19,20; Jas.4:14; Mt.10:37-39.
- (5) V.32a is Paul’s third ground of advice: “I would have you (men) without carefulness” (“free from care, worry, or anxiety, etc.”).
- (6) In vv.32b,33,34a, he illustrates what he means.
- (a) V.34a, “And his interests are divided,” NASV; ESV; Goodspeed; ASV.
- (b) V.34a: “Divided are the wife and the virgin”, Berry’s Lit. Translation
- (7) V.34b reveals that the advice to men in vv.32-34a is also equally applicable to women who are Christians.
- (8) V.35 is a general summing up of the character, form, purpose and object of the advice given in vv.26-34.
- (a) It shows beyond any doubt that none of the advice given is on the basis of right and wrong.
- (b) It was for their “profit” (advantage) in the service of Christ in light of the “present distress”.
- (c) As virgins being free from the unavoidable burdens the present conditions would impose on married people, they could devote their time to the Lord’s service “without distraction”, or without “divided interests”.

CONCLUSION

1. But what about the man and his virgin of vv.36-38?
2. Does it refer to a father and his virgin daughter as some claim, or to a man’s own virginity?
3. Does the Bible ever refer to a male as a virgin?
4. Our next lesson studying vv.36-38 will address and answer these questions.

F. PAUL'S SPECIFIC INTRUCTIONS CONCERNING MAN'S PROPER BEHAVIOR TOWARD HIS VIRGIN, OR HIS OWN VIRGINITY, 1COR.7:36-38.

1. Controversy has raged and is raging over these verses.
 - a. Some claim they have reference to a father and his actions toward or treatment of his virgin daughter, i.e. that these verses grant the father the right to grant or to withhold from his virgin daughter the right to marry; that it is entirely the will of the father that governs, not that of the virgin daughter
 - b. While others (of which I am one) claim these verses have reference to a man and his own virginity, and not that of a father and his virgin daughter.
 - c. We ask, even plead, for your patient attention as we seek to see what the truth of the matter is.
 - d. Important note: Don't separate these verses from their context of the "present distress" and the possible need discussed to be married in spite of the circumstances!!
 - e. Another important note: Who, according to the context is to be in control of that need, the person, male or female, with the need, or someone other than the person with the need?
 - f. Think, brethren!
2. First, we note what the KJV says, and seems to teach by necessary implication in vv.36-38.
 - a. V.36.
 - (1) Note that the pronoun "her" is in italics, which means it has been supplied by the translators; it was not in the original; they thought it should be.
 - (2) "Behaveth himself uncomely toward" means "to behave improperly toward; unbecoming of."
 - (3) "If she pass the flower of *her age*, need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not; let them marry."
 - (a) Notice the expression "need so require". Emp.!
 - (4) Thus the KJV necessarily implies this verse is referring to a man's virgin daughter, and some versions even insert the word "daughter" after the word "virgin".
 - b. V.37
 - (1) "Nevertheless he that standeth steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will"

- (a) Notice: “standeth steadfast in his heart”;
 - (b) “having no necessity”
 - (c) “but hath power over his own will”
 - (2) “And hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well”
 - (a) Notice: “decreed in his heart” ... “keep his virgin”
 - (3) If “virgin” means “virgin daughter” as the KJV necessarily implies, and as some contend, then you have the father, who “having no necessity, but hath power over his own will,” keeping his virgin daughter from marrying in spite of her will and her need to be married!
 - (4) When did the Lord in person, or through his inspired spokesmen, ever authorize one person to have control over another person’s passions and need to be married?
- c. V.38
- (1) “So then, he that giveth her in marriage doeth well”
 - (2) “But he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better”.
 - (3) So according to the implication of the KJV, the father who allows his virgin daughter to marry when she has passed “the flower of her age” (v.36) (i.e., when she has reached the age when her sexual nature has become fully developed and more insistent on gratification) does well.”
 - (4) But the father that denies her the right to marry and lawfully satisfy the need of her sexual passions does better!
 - (5) This version implies the father has absolute control over her sexual needs; she has none!
 - (6) Who can believe it? Especially in light of the context?
3. Some thought provoking questions based on vv.36-38 in light of their context and everything Paul has said in the preceding verses of 1Cor.7.
- (1) Do vv.36-38 really mean that a father has the right to decide when his virgin daughter needs to be married and when she doesn’t need to be married in the light of Vv.1,2,7-9, and thus either grant or refuse her the right to marry?

- (2) Do these verses relate to virgin daughters under the power of parents or guardians and their right to grant or withhold from these daughters the right or the need to be married?
 - (3) Or do these verses contain further instructions concerning one's own virginity (male or female)? I.e., do they have reference to the power one has over his own will, or to the power he has over another's will, viz., that of his virgin daughter?
 - (4) If we say the latter, i.e., the father's control over his virgin daughter's will and her need to be married, do we not throw Paul in conflict with everything he has said concerning the personal need of some to be married? The matter of incontinency and one's personal responsibility for it? Or, do we not put Paul in conflict with his teaching that it is better, due to the "present distress", to remain single only if one has control of his desires?
 - (5) If we say the former, i.e., that they have reference to one's own virginity, then we do not have Paul taking the responsibility for personal control out of the hands of one – the one personally involved in the need – and placing it in the hands of another, a thing Paul refused to do lest he cast "a snare" upon them or cause them to sin, according to vv.7-9,35?
 - (6) If we say these verses refer to a man's own virginity, are we not in harmony with the entire context?
 - (7) If we say they refer to a man's own virginity, we may "fly in the face of" the traditional interpretation of these verses, but are we guilty of perverting the text and its context?
 - (8) Does not the context of 1Cor.7 and even other passages suggest that a male can be and sometimes is referred to as a virgin? Vv.8,25a,26-28,32; Cf. Rev.14:4 (same word as 2Cor.11:2).
4. A look at other reputable translations of and commentary on 1Cor.7:36-38 as an aid to our study.
- a. The Interlinear Literal Translation Of The Greek N.T. by George Ricker Berry:
 - (1) V.36: "But if anyone thinks (he) behaves unseemly to his virginity, if he is beyond (his) prime, and so it ought to be, what he wills let him do, he does not sin : let them marry."

- (2) V.37: “But he who stands firm in heart, not having necessity, but has authority over his own will, and this has judged in his heart to keep his virginity, he does well.”
- (3) V.38: “So that also he that gives in marriage does well; and he that gives not in marriage does better.”
- b. The Englishman’s Greek N.T. renders v.36: “But if anyone thinks he behaves unseemly (improperly) to his virginity, if he be beyond his prime, and so it ought to be, let him do what he wills, he does not sin; let them marry.”
- c. Matthew Henry’s Commentary: “But I think the apostle is here continuing his former discourse, and advising unmarried persons, who are at their own disposal, what to do, the man’s virgin being meant of his virginity. ‘*he that keepeth his virgin*’ (v.37) seems to be rather meant of preserving his own virginity than keeping his daughter a virgin, though it be altogether uncommon to use the word in this sense...”
- d. Adam Clarke Commentary, Vol. VI, pp.227,228:
 “3. The apostle by *parthenos* – par-then’- nos -- does not mean a virgin, but the state of virginity or celibacy, whether in man or woman. Both Mr. Locke and Dr. Whitby are of this opinion, and the latter reasons on it thus:
 “It is generally supposed that these verses relate to virgins under the power of parents or guardians, and the usual inference is, that children are to be disposed of in marriage by the parents, guardians, etc. Now this may be true, but it has no foundation in the text, for ‘*that he will keep his virgin*’ is not to keep his daughter’s, but his own virginity, or rather his purpose of virginity...And that this must be the true import of these words appears from this consideration, that this depends upon the purpose of his own heart, and the power he has over his own will, and the no necessity arising from himself to change this purpose. Whereas the keeping a daughter unmarried depends not on these conditions on her father’s part but on her own; for, let her have a necessity, and surely the apostle would not advise the father to keep her a virgin, because he had determined to do so; nor could there be any doubt whether the father had power over his own will or not, when necessity lay upon hm

to betroth his virgin. The Greek runs to this sense: if he had stood already firm in his heart, finding no necessity, viz. to change his purpose; and hath power over his own will, not to marry; finding himself able to persist in the resolution he had made to keep his virginity, he does well to continue a virgin...

“*Parthenos* here should be considered as implying not a vigin, but the state of virginity or celibacy.

“And need so require”; or, if there appear to be a necessity; is to be understood of any particular change in his circumstances or in his feelings...then let him do what he wills or purposes

“Instead of *gameitosan*, let them marry (v.36), I think *gameito*, let him marry, is the true reading, and agrees best with the context

“The whole of the 37th verse relates to the purpose that the man has formed and the strength that he has to keep his purpose of perpetual celibacy, being under no necessity to change that purpose

“Instead of..., ‘he that given *her* in marriage (v.38), I purpose to read... ‘he who marrieth,’ which is the reading of the Codex Alexandrinus, the Codex Vaticanus, No.1209, and of some others: with Clement, Methodius, and Basil...He then who marrieth, though previously intending perpetual virginity, doeth well...and he who marrieth not, doeth better, because of the present distress.”

5. E.M. Zerr’s exegesis or explanation of vv.36-38, which without a doubt in my mind, teaches the truth and harmonizes with the context. (from E.M. Zerr’s Bible Commentary, Vol. 6)

a. V.36: “This verse (as here translated [KJV] is entirely out of line with the general teaching of the chapter.

(1) “Note the pronouns ‘her’ is in italics which is because the KJ translators did not understand the verse.

(2) “Some later commentators even insert the word ‘daughter’ after ‘virgin’, for which there is not the slightest ground in the original.

(3) “They make this verse refer to a father’s willingness for his daughter to marry.

- (4) “What would a man’s control over his own passions have to do with his consent to his daughter’s marriage?”
- (5) “The confusion is caused by a common but erroneous notion that “virgin” always means a woman. A look at Rev.14:4 would show that to be wrong, even if one could not consult the original
- (6) “When the word in question is used as a state or condition in life, it means ‘virginity’. The Englishman’s Greek N.T. renders this verse as follows: ‘But if anyone thinks he behaves unseemly (improperly) to his virginity, if he be beyond his prime, and so it ought to be, let him do what he wills, he does not sin; let them marry.
- (7) “It is easy to see this verse means the same as Paul’s teaching in the rest of the chapter, namely, that it is best to remain single if one has control of his desires. But if he begins to doubt his ability to remain chaste in an unmarried state, then he should marry, and in so doing he would not commit any sin.
- (8) “It is true it says let ‘them’ marry, which is because any marriage requires two persons.
- (9) “The word ‘virgin’ is from *parthenos* – par-then’-os – and Thayer gives the following definition as it applies to men: ‘one who has never had commerce (intimacy) with women.’
- (10) “ ‘Pass the flower of her (his) age’ means a male who has reached the age when his sexual nature has become fully developed and more insistent on gratification.
- (11) “By changing the pronouns from the feminine to the masculine, as the inflection of composition in the Greek text requires, the verse will be easily understood.
- (12) “It will then give the same advice that the apostle has given throughout the chapter, namely, **moral chastity is more important than freedom from the burden of family life.**

- (13) “If a man cannot have sure control over his desires, he should avail himself of marriage which is the Lord’s plan for lawful gratification of them.
- (14) “This is directly taught in v.28, where Paul explains that his purpose in giving the advice was to have them avoid the ‘trouble in the flesh’ that would come to married people in the ‘present distress’.
- b. V.37: “This is the same in meaning as the preceding verse (only from the opposite viewpoint and speaks of one who hath power over his own will, ejd).
- c. V.38: (Is the conclusion reached based on vv.36,37, ejd)
 - (1) “The pronouns ‘her’ is in italics in both sentences and is not justified by the original
 - (2) “The phrase ‘giveth in marriage’ means to give himself in marriage to another
 - (3) “He that becomes married (because of necessity, v.36) ‘doeth well’ because he avoids the guilt of immorality, but he that is able to remain unmarried (with purity and self control, ejd) ‘doeth better’ (during this ‘present distress’ ejd) because he not only maintains his moral chastity, but avoids the burdens of married life (during this ‘present distress’, ejd)

CONCLUSION

I’m open for discussion on these verses. But I cannot see how they can possible be made to refer to a father and his virgin daughter in light of the entire context of 1Cor.7!

Many years ago at Kennett, Mo. V.36 was even interpreted to justify or to allow pre-marital sex if the two involved were planning to be married. It was said, “Under those circumstances they have not sinned.”

Our next and final study in 1Cor.7 will be from notes from my old sermon: 1COR.7:39 – “ONLY IN THE LORD”, and is as follows:

G. THE WIDOW’S LIBERTY TO MARRY: “ONLY IN THE LORD,” 1COR.7:39,40.

(these notes will be pp.35 thru 43 of this series on 1Cor.7)

