**1 Corinthians 7**

*In answer to their questions, Paul teaches on the subject of marriage. He discusses the relationship, the Lord’s teaching, and proper responses to the* “present distress.” *(Synopsis by Stan Cox)*

1. Inquiry from Corinthians **(7:1-16:4)** – *“Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me:”* **(7:1)**.
   1. Concerning marriage **(7:1-24)**.
      1. General instruction concerning the marriage relationship **(v. 1-9)**.
         1. Celibacy is permitted and good, but marriage is profitable for avoiding sexual immorality **(v. 1-2).**
         2. Spousal responsibilities and proper attitudes toward one another **(v. 3-4).**
         3. Abstinence is permissible, not commanded, for a time to devote oneself wholly to the Lord **(v. 5-6).**
         4. The self-control regarding sexual matters (as Paul possesses) is a gift from God. It is good to remain as Paul is, if possible, but if not, marry – because of sexual immorality **(v. 7-9).**
      2. Instruction concerning divorce **(v. 10-16).**
         1. Commanded by the Lord **(v. 10-11).**
            1. Divorce is not permissible **(v. 10).**
            2. Although divorce is not permissible, if one does depart their only option is to remain unmarried, or be reconciled **(v. 11).**
         2. Instructed by Paul **(v. 12-16).**
            1. Christians must not divorce their unbelieving spouses **(v. 12-13).**
            2. For, the Christian sanctifies the unbeliever, and their children **(v. 14).**
            3. The Christian should let the unbeliever depart who departs. The Christian does not have to subject themselves to such difficulty. Note: *“bondage”* does not concern the marriage bond **(v. 15).**
            4. The Christian should *“let him depart”* because there is no way of knowing whether you will be able to save the unbelieving spouse **(v. 16).**
      3. Paul’s advice: remain as you are called **(v. 17-24).**
         1. Remain as you were called by the gospel **(v. 17).**
         2. The example of circumcision versus uncircumcision. The importance is keeping God’s commandments **(v. 18-20).**

*Outline continued on back. 🡪*

* + - 1. The example of being a slave versus free. Remain as you are called, yet if there is opportunity to become free you can use it. Christians are not to be concerned with pleasing men. They belong to God **(v. 21-24).**
  1. Concerning virgins **(7:25-40)**.
     1. Advice concerning virgins **(v. 25-38).**
        1. Because of the *“present distress,”* it is good to remain as one is. If you are married, remain so. If you are unmarried, do not seek a spouse. Yet, to marry is not to sin, but to experience unnecessary trouble **(v. 25-28).**
        2. The Christian should not let earthly relationships and attachments come between them and the Lord **(v. 29-31).**
        3. The unmarried are able to fully devote their thought and attention to the Lord. The married must give some attention to their spouse. It is good to remain unmarried to serve the Lord *“without distraction”* **(v. 32-35).**
        4. It is not sin to give your virgin in marriage, but the one who possesses *“power over his own will,”* and does not give her in marriage is better off **(v. 36-38).**
     2. Advice concerning widows **(v. 39-40).**
        1. One who is married is bound to their spouse. Death releases one from the bond, and they are free to remarry **(v. 39).**
        2. However, under the *“present distress”* it would be better to remain unmarried **(v. 40).**

**Questions**

1. What does Paul mean by, *“But to the rest I, not the Lord, say”* **(v. 12)**? Is there any distinction in degree of inspiration between *“I, not the Lord”*?
2. What might the *“present distress”* be **(v. 26)**? Under such circumstances, why would it be better *“for a man to remain as he is”*?
3. Explain the *“well”*/*”better”* relationship described by Paul **(v. 38)**. Does this concern spiritual standing with God?

**Another Question to Consider**

Jesus gave only one exception for remarriage in cases of divorce **(cf. Matthew 19:9)**. In an effort to find an additional exception, some have turned to the “Pauline Privilege” in **1 Corinthians 7:15**. They suggest the word *“bondage”* refers to the marriage bond. Thus, one is *“not under bondage in such cases”* and is free to remarry. Is this a legitimate use of the passage? Is there another exception? If not, why is this an abuse of the passage? What does the word *“bondage”* indicate?