

# Marriage And Divorce

## *David Watts Jr.*

**Text:** 1 Corinthians 7

### **Introduction:**

- I. Introduction to 1 Corinthians 7
  - A. 1 Corinthians 7 is a great chapter that speaks to vital subjects for all Christians of all times and generations.
  - B. Those subjects include:
    1. Celibacy
    2. The sexual relationship
    3. Rights and responsibilities in marriage
    4. Advantages of remaining unmarried
    5. Challenges of remaining unmarried
    6. What to do after an unlawful divorce
    7. What to do in the case of a mixed marriage.
    8. Serving God in one's present condition
    9. Reasons why marriage may not be wise in some circumstances
    10. The bond involved in a lawful marriage.
    11. Remarriage after the death of a spouse.
  - C. Additionally, 1 Corinthians 7 is vital for us because many have used it to prop up false doctrines such as:
    1. There are certain non-fornication reasons for lawful divorce.
    2. Abandonment allows one to remarry lawfully.
    3. A person is allowed to lawfully remain with the spouse he has when he obeys the Gospel (regardless of previous marriage, divorce and remarriage history).
  - D. This chapter is vital for us, because like the rest of the book, it is inspired by God.
    1. Paul declares in 1 Cor. 2:7: "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery..."
    2. Paul again says in 1 Cor. 2:10: "But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit."
    3. Paul also says in 1 Cor. 2:12: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God."
    4. Paul says in 1 Cor. 2:13: "These things we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches..."
    5. And Paul declares in 1 Cor. 2:16: "But we have the mind of Christ..."
  - E. There are several unique and/or less common qualities to this chapter as compared with other New Testament writings.

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1. There are three “now” sections
    - a. These sections identify very clearly Paul’s response to various circumstances and conditions.
    - b. At least one of these “now” sections was in direct response to something the Corinthians had written to Paul and asked about.
      - 1) 1 Cor. 7:1: “Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me...”
    - c. These three “now” sections are:
      - 1) 1 Cor. 7:1: “Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me...”
      - 2) 1 Cor. 7:10: “Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord...”
      - 3) 1 Cor. 7:25: “Now concerning virgins...”
  2. In this chapter Paul clearly identifies some of his responses and writings as personal judgment and not divinely revealed doctrine.
    - a. This is unique to this chapter and, to the best of my knowledge, is not found elsewhere in Paul’s writing.
    - b. Other places *might* be similar:
      - 1) Example: Personal requests made of his brethren such as found in 2 Timothy 4:13
        - a) “Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come – and the books, especially the parchments.”
    - c. But in no other place does Paul clearly identify some of his teaching as personal judgment.
    - d. These sections of personal judgment often include the following components:
      - 1) A statement about the best course of action to take.
      - 2) A statement identifying an alternative course of action.
      - 3) A statement that if the alternative course of action is taken, there is no sin.
    - e. I consider these sections to be as follows:
      - 1) 1 Cor. 7:6: “But I say this as a concession, not as a commandment.”
        - a) Note: Although this particular section does not include the typical “you have not sinned...” statement, the passage and its associated context show this to be an example of Paul’s personal judgment.
      - 2) 1 Cor. 7:25-26, 28: “<sup>25</sup>Now concerning virgins: I have no commandment from the Lord; yet I give judgment as one whom the Lord in His mercy has made trustworthy. <sup>26</sup>I suppose therefore that this is good because of the present distress... <sup>28</sup>But even if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned.”
      - 3) 1 Cor. 7:36: “But if any man thinks he is behaving improperly toward his virgin, if she is past the flower of youth, and thus it must be, let him do what he wishes. He does not sin; let them marry.”
    - f. Another unique quality of this chapter is the frank discussion of the sexual relationship between husband and wife.
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- 1) While we are told elsewhere about the “one-flesh” relationship:
    - a) Mt. 19:6: “So then, they are no longer two but one flesh...”
    - b) 1 Cor. 6:16: “Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For ‘the two,’ He says, ‘shall become one flesh.’”
  - 2) Nowhere else are we told in such frank terms about the importance of the physical relationship and the dangers of deprivation.
    - a) 1 Cor. 7:5: “Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time... and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”
  - g. Another somewhat unique quality of this chapter is the fact that it gives commands to be followed in the event God’s laws have been violated.
    - 1) Some have referred to this as “contingency legislation.”
      - a) 1 Cor. 7:10-11: “Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord; a wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband.”
    - 2) Such commands about what to do when law has been violated must not be misconstrued to somehow give authority for violating the original law. More will be said about this point later in this study.
  3. 1 Cor. 7 must, like the rest of God’s word, be viewed and understood with an eye towards its textual context.
    - a. For example, the following contextual observations should be considered when studying this chapter:
      - 1) This chapter contains important answers to matters that concerned the Corinthians. In fact, they had apparently written to Paul expressing their questions (1 Cor. 7:1).
      - 2) This church was troubled with much division (1 Cor. 1-4).
      - 3) This church tolerated an adulterous marriage (1 Cor. 5).
      - 4) This church often acted without love (1 Cor. 8, 13).
      - 5) This church misused the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11).
  4. 1 Cor. 7 must also be viewed within its cultural and historic context.
    - a. There is some sort of “present distress” that influences Paul’s writing.
      - 1) 1 Cor. 7:26: “I suppose therefore that this is good because of the present distress...”
    - b. Some questions we should keep in mind:
      - 1) What is the “present distress”?
      - 2) How would it have affected the Christians in Corinth?
      - 3) What impact does the “present distress” have on Paul’s teachings?
      - 4) Which of Paul’s teachings are influenced by the “present distress”?
    - c. These are questions we will attempt to consider in this study.
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**Body:****I. 1 Cor. 7:1-9****A. Celibacy is acceptable before God (1 Cor. 7:1, 6-9).**

1. Apparently a question has been sent to Paul by writing.
  - a. We can conclude that the question would have essentially been, “Is it proper for a man not to touch a woman?”
2. “Touch” is the NKJV, KJV, NASB, and ASV translation of the Greek word *haptomai* (Strong’s number 680).
  - a. The ESV renders it as “to have sexual relations”
3. Vine’s Expository Dictionary says of *haptomai* (listed under the entry for “touch”)
  - a. “to have carnal intercourse with a woman.”
4. Paul is clearly *not* teaching that marriage and the resulting sexual intercourse is wrong, for he teaches in this very context:
  - a. 1 Cor. 7:2: “let each man have his own wife...”
  - b. 1 Cor. 7:5: “Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time...”
  - c. 1 Cor. 7:9: “If they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry.”
  - d. 1 Cor. 7:28: “But even if you do marry, you have not sinned.”
5. Additionally, the Hebrew writer says in Hebrews 13:4: “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”
6. Clearly Paul is teaching that to remain celibate and unmarried is acceptable to God.
7. But there is a challenge to remaining celibate. Paul describes it in the following verses:
  - a. 1 Cor 7:2: “Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.”
  - b. 1 Cor. 7:9: “If they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.”
8. The fact that it is “good” not to marry and have sexual relations with a wife is not divine command.
  - a. Paul says in 1 Cor. 7:6: “But I say this as a concession, not as a command.”
  - b. “Concession” is the NKJV, ASV, NASB and ESV rendering. The KJV translates it as “permission.”
  - c. It is the translation of the Greek word *suggnome*. (Strong’s number 4774)
  - d. It is a compound word made up of two Greek words. They are:
    - 1) *Sun*, (Strong’s number 4862). Thayer indicates it is a preposition meaning “with”
    - 2) *Ginosko*, (Strong’s number 1097). This word has a variety of meanings and usages, but a predominate meaning according to Thayer is “to know.”

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- e. Thayer speaks of *suggnome* as meaning “pardon, indulgence” while Strong defines it as “fellow knowledge, that is concession – permission.”
  - f. This is the only usage of *suggnome* in the New Testament.
  - g. The best definition is simply to see how Paul used the word.
    - 1) Paul makes the meaning of *suggnome* clear as he contrasts it with “commandment.”
    - 2) Thus, what Paul is making clear, is that the “goodness” of not marrying is not to be misconstrued as a command against marriage.
      - a) Remember Paul’s admonition to marry in 1 Tim. 5:14 as he said: “Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully.”
      - b) Paul’s advice not to marry must be held in stark contrast with false teachers who will command not to marry as mentioned by Paul in 1 Tim. 4:3: “forbidding to marry...”.
  - h. Improper application of 1 Cor. 7:6:
    - 1) Some might suppose that the “concession, not command” statement applies to what has come directly before (1 Cor. 7:3-5).
      - a) That is, some might believe that the admonition to the husband and the wife to give proper affection to each other is what Paul refers to as “concession, not command.”
    - 2) On the contrary, I believe the “concession, not command” refers to what came in verse 1.
      - a) Verses 3-5 serves as a parenthetical note of explanation to 1 Cor. 7:2.
      - b) Verse 2 explains that marriage is a guard against sexual immorality.
      - c) Verses 3-5 explains *how* marriage serves as a guard against sexual immorality.
        - 1] It is a guard against sexual immorality when each mate provides for the physical needs of the other through the sexual relationship.
        - 2] That guard will be weakened when there is deprivation of the sexual relationship.
      - d) Thus, the “concession, not as a commandment” statement applies not to the parenthetical explanation in verses 3-5 but rather to the things said in verse 1 of this chapter.

**B. The sexual relationship in marriage is an important defense against sexual immorality (1 Cor. 7:2-5)**

- 1. The husband and wife must give to each other proper affection.
  - a. The KJV says, “due benevolence.”
  - b. The NKJV says, “affection due her.”
  - c. The ASV simply says, “her due.”

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- d. The NASB says, “must fulfill his duty to his wife.”
  - e. The ESV says, “should give to his wife her conjugal rights.”
2. The context shows that this has reference to the sexual relationship.
    - a. Paul speaks of the wife’s body being controlled by the husband and the husband’s body being controlled by the wife (1 Cor. 7:4).
    - b. Paul forbids depriving one another, except with mutual consent for a time (1 Cor. 7:5).
    - c. Paul speaks of the reality that Satan will tempt the husband and wife because of their lack of self-control (1 Cor. 7:5).
    - d. And Paul places all of this as a hedge against the sexual immorality of 1 Cor. 7:2
    - e. Clearly, the sexual relationship is not merely for the reproduction of human life. Rather, it is also for the satisfying of natural desires which God places within man.
  3. A unique quality of marriage – focus on the other’s needs.
    - a. This section is the first of several teachings about the unique focus of marriage:
      - 1) 1 Cor. 7:4: “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.”
      - 2) 1 Cor. 7:33: “But he who is married cares about the things of the world – how he may please his wife.”
      - 3) 1 Cor. 7:34: “There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world – how she may please her husband.”
    - b. Thus, marriage involves a *change in focus*.
      - 1) The married man ought to think about how to please his wife.
      - 2) The married woman ought to think about how to please her husband.
      - 3) The married man does not have authority over his own body, but the wife has authority over his body.
      - 4) The married woman does not have authority over her own body, but the husband has authority over her body.
    - c. The Bible perspective contrasted with the natural perspective:
      - 1) Surely, leading up to many marriages the man contemplates the advantages marriage will bring to him.
      - 2) Just as surely, leading up to many marriages the woman contemplates the advantages marriage will bring to her.
      - 3) During many marriages, men are often focused on their needs and desires.
      - 4) During many marriages, women are often focused on their needs and desires.
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- 5) But the Bible pattern is opposite this: the man focuses on this wife and the wife focuses on her husband.

## II. 1 Cor. 7:10-16

### A. In this discussion of marriage and divorce, some basic understanding of the vocabulary is essential.

1. The Greek word translated “**marry**” is *gameo*, (Strong’s number 1060). This is the verb form of the Greek noun *gamos*, (Strong’s number 1062), which means to be married.
2. Just as in the English, when the prefix **a-** is put in front of a word, it causes the resulting new word to take on an opposite meaning.
  - a. In English we use the words “moral” and “amoral.”
  - b. Or consider the words “typical” and “atypical.”
3. Accordingly, the Greek word translated “**unmarried**” is *agamos*, (Strong’s number 22). It simply and literally means the opposite of married, i.e. unmarried.
4. It is important to notice that *gamos* (marriage) and *gameo* (to marry) is used by the Holy Spirit to describe both lawful marriage and unlawful marriages. It simply describes the fact that two are married.
  - a. For example, in Mt. 5:32 *gameo* is used to describe an unlawful and adulterous marriage. Nevertheless, it is a real marriage.
    - 1) “But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever *marries* {*gameo*} a woman who is divorced commits adultery.”
  - b. In Mark 6:17 *gameo* is again used to describe an unlawful marriage:
    - 1) “For Herod himself had sent and laid hold of John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife; for he had *married* {*gameo*} her.”
5. Some brethren make claims today that if a divorce is not lawful, God “does not recognize it” and that it is only a “piece of paper.”
  - a. This is done in an effort to pretend as though the divorce has not occurred, thus giving a put away spouse the ability to somehow “mentally divorce” their former mate for some subsequent fornication.
6. But just as the Holy Spirit describes unlawful marriages as real marriages, so the Holy Spirit describes unlawful divorces as real divorces with real consequences.
  - a. An example of this will be seen 1 Cor. 7:10 as the unlawful divorce leaves the parties “unmarried.” The word translated “unmarried” is *agamos* – the exact opposite of *gamos* – to be married.
  - b. Those who would claim an unlawful divorce is just a piece of paper without meaning or consequence ignore the fact that the Holy Spirit showed clearly that although unlawful it was yet real and carried real consequences.
7. Throughout our study let us know that divorces and marriages described in Scripture are real events with real consequences – even if they were unlawful events.

- a. This is not to imply that unlawful marriages have a right to exist. They do not, for the parties are bound to others (Rom. 7:2-3) thus making the new marriage adulterous.
- b. This is simply to say that while unlawful marriages do not have a right to exist (i.e. they have no basis in Bible authority), yet they do exist.
- c. This is no different from the fact that a woman has no right to murder the unborn life within her womb. Yet she can, and when she does, it is a real event with real consequences.

**B. In marriage: no divorce.**

1. In 1 Cor. 7:10-11 Paul discusses divorce circumstances between two Christians.
  - a. This can be seen by virtue of the following change in focus in a few verses:
    - 1) 1 Cor. 7:12: "But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe..."
    - 2) 1 Cor. 7:13: "And a woman who has a husband who does not believe..."
    - 3) 1 Cor. 7:14: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband..."
  - b. But in dealing with a circumstance of two believers that are married, Paul repeats principles and rules that are applicable to those who have been bound together by God (Mt. 19:6) regardless of whether they both are Christians, only one is a Christian, or both are non-Christians.
2. To the married, the Lord commands: no divorce.
  - a. Paul reveals that this is a command from the Lord:
    - 1) 1 Cor. 7:10: "...I command, yet not I but the Lord..."
    - 2) Of course, all of Paul's revelation was from the Lord
      - a) Gal. 1:12: "For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ."
    - 3) But in a special way, this was something the Lord had addressed already.
    - 4) Perhaps Paul had in mind such statements as:
      - a) Mt. 19:6: "So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."
      - b) Mt. 5:32: "But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason other than sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery."
  - b. The Lord's command:
    - 1) "A wife is not to depart from her husband."
    - 2) This is one of four parallel statements in this immediate context that forbid divorce.
      - a) 1 Cor. 7:10: "A wife is not to depart from her husband."
      - b) 1 Cor. 7:11: "A husband is not to divorce his wife."

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- c) 1 Cor. 7:12: "...let him not divorce her."
  - d) 1 Cor. 7:13: "...let her not divorce him."
  - c. A complicated word study proving that "depart" (NKJV – translation of *chorizo* in the Greek, Strong's number 5563) is not necessary.
    - 1) The context proves its meaning.
    - 2) The result of this "*chorizo*" is found in 1 Cor. 7:11
      - a) "If even if she does depart, let her remain *unmarried*." {Emphasis mine, dwjr}
      - b) Clearly, divorce – even the unlawful kind that violates the 1 Cor. 7:10 prohibition, leaves the parties "*unmarried*."
  - 3. Paul describes the required action if unlawful divorce does occur.
    - a. Paul presents two courses of action:
      - 1) Remain unmarried.
      - 2) Or be reconciled.
    - b. In evaluating these two courses of actions, let us be clear about these facts:
      - 1) The command to "not depart" was in fact a command.
      - 2) The command to "not depart" came from the Lord.
      - 3) Thus, if one divorces their mate (except it be for fornication – Mt. 19:9) it is sin.
        - a) They have violated Mt. 19:6, Mt. 19:9, Lk 16:18, Mark 10:11-12 and Mt. 5:32
        - b) They have violated the four-fold prohibition on divorce in 1 Cor. 7.
      - 4) All sin must be repented of if one is to remain in a proper relationship with God.
        - a) Paul shows in 2 Cor. 7 the kinds of action that will be taken if one is truly penitent over sin.
        - b) This action includes, according to 2 Cor. 7:
          - 1] "Sorrow in a godly manner"
          - 2] "Diligence"
          - 3] "Clearing of yourself"
          - 4] "Indignation"
          - 5] "Fear"
          - 6] "Vehement desire"
          - 7] "Zeal"
          - 8] "Vindication"
          - 9] "In all things you proved yourselves clear in this matter."

- c) It is abundantly clear that a person seeking to repent from sin must sorrow and diligently clear themselves in this matter with indignation, fear, desire and zeal.
- 5) It is obvious then that if one violates 1 Cor. 7:10 and divorces their mate, a godly reaction is to seek repentance and reconciliation.
  - a) However, it is just as clear that reconciliation requires the original mate to take back the mate who departed.
  - b) This may not happen. The original mate may not act godly in this matter.
  - c) At such point, surely it can be said that the mate who divorced, did all they could to repent and be reconciled.
  - d) They are then clear of their sin of divorce and may live unmarried.
  - e) But to seek to live unmarried without true repentance is certainly not in keeping with the completeness of God's revelation.
- 6) At the end of this section, we'll evaluate in more detail some false doctrine in this regard.

**C. In a spiritually mixed marriage: no divorce** (1 Cor. 7:12-16)

1. Paul provides for all scenarios in this section of Scripture.
2. If an unbeliever is willing to dwell with the believer, the believer must not divorce the unbeliever. (1 Cor. 7:12-13)
3. If an unbeliever is unwilling to dwell with the believer, the believer should let them go. (1 Cor. 7:15)
4. In any event, notice again the prohibitions on divorce.

**D. Sanctification by marriage**

1. In explaining that the believer must not divorce an unbeliever, Paul says something about the believer sanctifying the unbeliever and the children being holy instead of unclean.
2. This verse has certain difficulties but we know certain things for sure.
  - a. Paul is not teaching that a person is saved from their sins and made holy to God simply because they have a believing spouse.
    - 1) Otherwise, might not Peter have preached on Pentecost, "Repent and be baptized, or else marry someone who has...?"
    - 2) Scripture is always clear that each individual must make the choice to do right and be pleasing to God. (See Ezekiel 18).
  - b. Sanctification means to be made holy, pure, clean or pleasing to God.
    - 1) The same word that is here translated "sanctified" is used in Mt. 23:17 when Jesus asks:
      - a) "Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?"

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- b) Jesus is not saying that the temple makes the gold saved, for gold neither has sin nor can it be spiritually saved.
  - c) This usage shows that sanctification can also mean to make clean, pure, or pleasing to God.
- 2) What does a lawful marriage make clean, or pleasing to God?
    - a) It makes the sexual relationship clean and pure. See Heb. 13:7
    - b) It makes the children pure in the sense that they are legitimate children instead of illegitimate.
  - 3) Thus Paul is simply explaining the following:
    - a) Don't divorce your unbelieving mate.
    - b) Your marriage to them is what makes the physical relationship pure.
    - c) Your marriage to them is what makes your children legitimate and not illegitimate.
- E. **“Not under bondage.”** (1 Cor. 7:15)
- 1. Paul says that if the unbeliever does depart (that is, insist on divorce), let them depart, as the believer is not “under bondage in such cases.”
    - a. **“Bondage”** here is a translation of the Greek word *douloo* (Strong's number 1402).
    - b. The common English translation of this word as **“bondage”** makes us naturally think about the word translated **“bond”** in 1 Cor. 7:39 and Rom. 7:2-3.
    - c. Yet the words are quite different.
      - 1) 1 Cor. 7:39 and Rom. 7:2-3 use the Greek word *deo* (Strong's number 1210).
      - 2) *Douloo* is defined by Thayer as “to make a slave of, reduce to bondage.”
      - 3) *Deo* is defined by Thayer as “to bind, tie, fasten...”
      - 4) *Deo* has the connotation of a legal obligation. *Douloo* has the connotation of making another person a slave.
      - 5) Accordingly, the ESV very helpfully renders *douloo* in 1 Cor. 7:15 as follows:
        - a) “...In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved...”
    - d. Paul's point then is very clear:
      - 1) While it is true that a mate is bound by law to his or her spouse per Rom. 7:2-3 and 1 Cor. 7:39...
      - 2) If an unbeliever insists on divorcing the believer and leaving, the believer is not enslaved to that mate.
      - 3) The believer is not required to follow the unbeliever around as though they were a slave.

F. **False teaching examined.**

- 1. **Claim: 1 Cor. 7:10-11 deals with mere separation, not divorce**

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- a. Example: Lewis G. Hale in his booklet *Except For Fornication – Guilty or Not Guilty? Who Can Remarry?* believes this passage deals with separation, not divorce (page 7):
    - 1) “Now another comes saying, ‘None of those things describes what I have done.’ ‘What have you done?’ ‘I have gone beyond the point of separation. I am divorced and remarried.’ What is this person to do? Let us be honest. Can you go to the Bible and put your finger on an exact verse of scripture that offers such a clear answer as: ‘remain unmarried, or be reconciled’? That is clear concerning the case of people who are separated.”
  - b. **Fact: 1 Cor. 7:10-11 deals with divorce and says that divorce leaves a person unmarried.**
    - 1) As noted before, the Holy Spirit chooses an important word to describe the woman’s present marital condition. That word is “unmarried.” That settles the issue.
2. **Claim: The divorce of this context is merely a departure devoid of any civil procedures and regulations.**
    - a. **Fact: Every nation has God-given authority to create civil procedures and regulations.**
      - 1) Let us not forget that when a society institutes a civil procedure and regulations on divorce, they do so with the authority of God:
        - a) Rom. 13:1-5: “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore, whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves... for he is God’s minister to you for good... for he is God’s minister... therefore you must be subject...”
      - 2) When a nation regulates the process for obtaining a divorce, they do so with God’s authority. It is our job then to adhere to those laws and not resist them.
    - b. **Fact: God ordained a process in the Old Testament to follow in the case of divorce.**
      - 1) Deut. 24:1: “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house...”
      - 2) Notice this process had these four components:
        - a) **Determination to divorce** (“she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her...”)
        - b) **Formal declaration of divorce** (“he writes her a certificate of divorce...”)
        - c) **Formal notice of divorce** (“puts it in her hand...”)
        - d) **Complete severing of the marriage relationship** (“...and sends her out of his house...”)

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- c. **Fact: If a government, as authorized by God in Romans 13, chooses to formalize and regulate the divorce process, they are simply doing what God did when His nation was in existence.**
3. **Claim: An unlawful divorce leaves the parties still married “in the sight of God.”**
- a. **Fact: God says otherwise. The divine revelation says of those who have divorced:**
- 1) “Let her remain *unmarried*...”
- b. Some have suggested that the phrase “or be reconciled to her husband” proves that she is still married to him.
- 1) It is quite common in Scripture for the inspired writer to refer to a person by their most prominent attribute or quality even if the attribute is no longer true. This is done for accommodative reasons for the purpose of identification.
  - 2) Bible examples of this:
    - a) Ananias & Sapphira
      - 1] After the death of Ananias in Acts 5, Luke still refers to Sapphira as “his wife” in Acts 5:7.
      - 2] After the death of Ananias, Luke still refers to him as “your husband” in Acts 5:9
      - 3] Yet in both cases, death had clearly ended their marriage relationship.
      - 4] Rather, this use of “your husband” or “his wife” is accommodative for the purpose of identifying the parties.
    - b) Rahab the harlot.
      - 1] Hebrews 11:31 describes her as “the harlot Rahab” despite the fact that God’s word indicated she changed her ways and lived with God’s people.
      - 2] This identification as a “harlot” was her most prominent characteristic, even though it was not true of her after Jericho was conquered.
    - c) The blind man
      - 1] John 9:17 refers to the man healed of blindness as “the blind man” even though he was no longer blind. This text does not claim he is now blind again. Rather, this is his most prominent identifying characteristic, although it is not presently in force.
    - d) Bathsheba
      - 1] Bathsheba is described as the “wife of Uriah” even after Uriah was dead (2 Sam. 11:26; 12:9-10)
    - e) Such accommodative usage for identification purposes (“be reconciled to her husband...”) should not be misconstrued as carrying greater weight than the divine explanation of her condition and divine direction of her future choices (“remain unmarried.”).
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4. **Claim: If a wife or husband violates 1 Cor. 7:10, it is not sin and a perfectly acceptable resolution is that they simply remain unmarried.**
- a. This position suggests that Paul's teaching in 1 Cor. 7:10 does not carry the force of divine law, of which a violation is sin.
  - b. As noted in the introduction of this study, a Bible student should understand that almost always, Paul's writings carry the force of divine law, as they came from God Himself.
  - c. The exception to this rule is when Paul specifically indicates that his teaching is judgment (cf. 1 Cor. 7:6, 28, 36, 38).
  - d. There is no such disclaimer associated with the teaching of 1 Cor. 7:10.
  - e. Other passages show that when Paul speaks, the words he speaks are *the standard* and deviation from those words results in being "accursed."
    - 1) Gal 1:8: "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed."
      - a) Notice that the new teaching, even from an angel, must be compared to those things previously taught by Paul. Paul's teaching is the standard for believers.
    - 2) 2 Thess. 3:6: "But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us."
      - a) Notice that this command is something given in the "name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Even this command (to withdraw from some) is given with God's authority.
      - b) Notice also that the walk of brethren is to be compared to that which Paul had previously taught. Clearly, Paul's teaching carried and should carry today the force of divine law.
  - f. Some have supposed the command of 1 Cor. 7:10 to be somewhat "flexible" because of that which is contained in verses 12-13.
    - 1) 1 Cor. 7:12-13: "But to the rest I, not the Lord say: 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."
    - 2) The argument is made that when Paul says, "if she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her" it implies that if she is not willing to live with him he may divorce her lawfully.
      - a) This is purely wishful thinking and defies the truth of the context.
      - b) Verses 12-13 simply state that if the unbeliever is willing to live with the believer, the believer must not divorce them.
      - c) Verse 15 show the proper response to the other side of the equation. What if the unbeliever is not willing to live with them? Is divorce authorized? On the contrary, what the Bible says is, "let him depart; a brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases."

- d) So while some wish to invent authority for a believer to lawfully divorce an unbeliever who does not wish to remain married, Paul specifically says that the believer's duty is to simply allow them to depart.
  - e) Allowing one to depart and carry out their sinful actions (unlawful divorce) is far different from the Christian taking actual divorce action against the unbeliever. Allowing them to leave (and not having to follow them around like a slave) is lawful. Divorcing the unbeliever is not lawful.
  - g. One must also consider the irony of the position that says this context provides a means for lawful divorce, as four times Paul specifically prohibits divorce.
5. **Claim: 1 Cor. 7:12-13 gives authority to a Christian to lawfully divorce an unbelieving mate.**
- a. See above discussion of verses 12-13.
  - b. God is not implying a right to do what He has repeatedly forbidden except in the case of fornication.
  - c. God is simply giving both ends of the spectrum.
    - 1) If the unbeliever is willing to stay married to you, don't divorce them.
    - 2) If the unbeliever is unwilling to live with you, let them go. You're not a slave.
  - d. Some may wonder why God would have to tell the believer not to divorce an unbeliever who was willing to live with them (vs. 12-13).
    - 1) Surely it is true that we always need a reminder. (Titus 3:1, 8; 2 Peter 1:12-15)
    - 2) Second, it is possible that part of their question to Paul was, "**Must** we divorce our mates if they are unbelievers?"
      - a) Such a question would have been plausible in light of Paul's application in 2 Cor. 6:11-18 of that which God had earlier said:
        - 1] "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord..."
      - b) Such a question would also have been plausible from the Old Testament example of Ezra commanding divorce of foreign wives in Ezra 10.
        - 1] Perhaps they would have recalled such teachings and wondered if they applied to Christians.
    - 3) In any event, Paul clarifies the matter and the clarification that he gives in no way encourages divorce, but rather further prevents it.

### III. 1 Cor. 7: 17-24

#### A. Remain in your original condition.

- 1. This teaching can be very well summarized in verse 17:
  - a. "...as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk."
- 2. Or also in verse 20:

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- a. "Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called."
  3. "Called" must refer to being called by the Gospel
    - a. 2 Thess. 2:13-14: "...because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He *called* you by our gospel..."
  4. Is Paul therefore saying that in whatever way you lived when you were called, that's the way you should keep on living?
    - a. Such a view would create obvious contradictions with the rest of Scripture. Consider just a couple of Paul's statements in the book of Colossians.
      - 1) Col. 1:10: "...that you may have a walk worthy of the Lord..."
      - 2) Col. 2:6: "As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him..."
      - 3) Col. 3:1-11: "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above... set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God... Therefore, put to death your members which are on the earth... in *which you also once walked* when you lived in them..."
    - b. We can clearly see that our life after obeying the Gospel must be different than our life prior to the Gospel.
      - 1) We are to put off sin and its ways.
      - 2) We are to put off the works of the flesh, and put on the works of the Spirit as described in Gal. 5:16-26.
  5. What then is Paul teaching, when he says, "...as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk" and "Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called"?
    - a. Whatever this teaching is, this is what Paul teaches in "all the churches." (1 Cor. 7:17).
    - b. This must necessarily fit with Paul's teaching in Galatia, Colosse, and every other church.
  6. Simply put, Paul is telling Christians to remain in various physical or moral conditions which have no spiritual significance, even after obedience to the Gospel.
    - a. We know this because of the various conditions he lists in the remaining verses. Those conditions include:
      - 1) Circumcised
      - 2) Uncircumcised
      - 3) Slave
      - 4) Free
    - b. There is obviously no spiritual or moral significance to being in one of these conditions.
      - 1) Paul explains this in 1 Cor. 7:19 when he says, "Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters."
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- a) This teaching is similar to Col. 3:11: "...where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all."
- 2) This should not be confused with Paul's clear teaching that we must be spiritually circumcised of heart. (See Col. 2:11; Phil. 3:3).
- c. Therefore, a new Christian who might be a slave, ought not to think that he can cut himself loose unlawfully from that master-slave relationship.
  - 1) Paul's return of the runaway slave, now fellow saint, Onesimus to Philemon would be a good example of this principle at work.
  - 2) Despite the fact that Onesimus was now a Christian, he still had certain physical conditions put upon him that he was obliged to meet.
- d. As we have already noted, this should not be misconstrued to be an endorsement for staying in sin. We'll explore this concept more in the next section.

#### B. False teaching examined.

1. **Claim: These principles allow a person to remain with whatever person they are married to at the time of their conversion.**
  - a. The theory says that if a man had unlawfully married and divorce even 20 times prior to obeying the Gospel, the woman he is married to at the moment he obeys the Gospel now becomes his lawful wife.
  - b. This theory is well expressed by Homer Hailey in his book *The Divorce and Remarried Who Would Come to God*, page 66:
    - 1) "Furthermore, Paul said, 'Let each man abide in that calling wherein he was called... Brethren, let each man, wherein he was called, therein abide with God' (I Cor. 7:20, 24); this included his answer to questions about marriage. Someone will ask if we mean to say they may continue in an adulterous marriage? This begs the question. Where did God ever speak of unbelievers who are now believers as 'living in adultery?' It must be proved by scripture that God considers such remarried non-believers, who through faith come to the blood of Christ, are living in an adulterous state."
  - c. **Fact: Christ's teaching on marriage, divorce and remarriage was addressed to all people of all times.**
    - 1) Christ's teaching in Mt. 5:32 prohibiting unlawful divorces and remarriages was addressed twice to "whoever." That is, whoever divorces their wife, and whoever marries her who is divorced.
    - 2) Christ's teaching in Mt. 5:32 was addressed to people at large, not just believers who had been baptized.
    - 3) Christ's teaching in Mt. 19:9 also includes a two-fold use of the term, "whoever."
    - 4) Christ's teaching in Mt. 19:9 was also addressed not just to believers. In fact, Christ is specifically responding to and teaching unbelievers, the Pharisees (Mt. 19:3).
  - d. **Fact: The adultery that Christ speaks of in an unlawful marriage is an ongoing process of adultery, not merely a one-time event.**

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- 1) Maurice Lusk in his book, *Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage In The Teachings of Jesus and Paul*, spends some time discussing the importance of Greek verb tenses. In so doing, he considers the meaning of the Greek that is translated as “commits adultery” in places like Mt. 19:9
    - a) He considers whether “adultery” is just a one-time event as Hailey suggests.
    - b) Or rather, is it an ongoing process of adultery by remaining in the marriage relationship?
  - 2) Lusk explains on page 54 that the present tense nature of the Greek verb used in this place demonstrates that continuing adultery is under consideration:
    - a) “The present tense of *moichatai*, the present indicative of *moicheuo*, here in Matt. 19:9 is linear (i.e., continuous action or state).
  - 3) Again on pages 54-55 he continues the discussion by pointing out that not only is the tense of the Greek verb clearly that of ongoing action, but that the idea of ongoing action is intrinsic even to the verb itself:
    - a) “There is no factor here in the text of Matt. 19:9 which would demand a different kind of action be associated with the present tense verb *moichatai* than that which would be usual, i.e., continuous action. And to this we would add that the very idea intrinsic to the verb *moicheuo*, as used here in this context, would also demand that *moichatai* be taken as conveying continuous or linear action. The ‘kind of action’ under consideration here is continuous in that the marriage under consideration is adulterous; for one to be in such a relationship, on a continuous basis, certainly implies that action contemplated is continuous. If one is ‘committing adultery’ by being in a particular relationship – perpetuating that relationship – he is clearly involved in a ‘continuous action.’”
2. In evaluating this theory, some questions and parallel circumstances ought to be considered
- a. If two men were in a homosexual marriage and obeyed the Gospel, are they now allowed to remain in such a homosexual marriage? If not, why not? If not, explain why they would have to separate and yet the heterosexual couple would not have to separate.
    - 1) Hailey responds to such a question by saying on page 66 of his book:
      - a) “One may ask if married homosexuals should continue in their relationship. Certainly not! We are discussing marriage, not the abominations of homosexuality.”
    - 2) Yet brother Hailey evidently forgot that we are not merely discussing marriage. We are discussing marriages, which Jesus said are adulterous. So the most honest comparison is that of adulterous, immoral heterosexual marriages with adulterous, immoral homosexual marriages. Both are wrong and both must be repented of.
    - 3) Another gospel preacher claims that the Bible prohibitions against homosexuality are clear but that there has always been “confusion” (from
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the very moment Christ taught on the subject) about the truth of Mt. 19:9, thus he would require homosexuals to repent but would not require previously married/divorced persons to repent.

- a) Of course, this position essentially accuses the Holy Spirit of being unable to clearly communicate God's Word.
  - b) The fallacy of this fraudulent notion can be seen when we simply ask, "What happens when one day our society at large sees only 'confusion' in the Bible prohibitions against homosexuality. Will we then cease to preach against it and demand repentance?"
  - c) In truth, the prohibitions against adultery and homosexuality are clear and concise. In fact, they stand side by side in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10.
- b. If a heterosexual couple were living together before marriage when they obeyed the Gospel, would they need to remedy the situation? If not, why not? If not, why would unlawful and adulterous marriages be made okay, but unlawful and sexually immoral living arrangements prior to marriage not be made okay?
  - c. Explain how persons can fulfill the commands of Acts 2:38 and Acts 3:19 ("repent") and yet continue to live in exactly the same fashion after baptism as they did before baptism.
  - d. Explain why every example Paul gives in this text to illustrate the principle being taught (i.e. "Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called.") is an example that is devoid of moral or religious significance (e.g. circumcision, uncircumcised, slave, free) yet this principle is being applied to areas that *are clearly* of moral and religious significance as noted in Mt. 19 and 1 Cor. 6:10-11.

#### IV. 1 Cor. 7:25-40

##### A. Advantages of remaining single

1. Paul once again turns his attention to those who might remain single and unmarried
2. Verse 25 identifies his teaching as judgment, not a command from the Lord.
3. Because of the "present distress" it is good to remain as you are.
  - a. "Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed."
    - 1) "**Bound**" here is again the Greek word *deo*
      - a) *Deo* is the word used in 1 Cor. 7:39 and Romans 7:2 to describe the bond involved in a lawful marriage
    - 2) "**Loosed**" here is the Greek word *luisis* (Strong's number 3080). It is also related to *luo* (Strong's number 3089)
    - 3) Essentially Paul is teaching, "Do not be seeking a release from the bond of marriage."
      - a) This should not be construed to imply that such a release from the bond of marriage is possible, save in the event of death or for the one who puts away a guilty fornicator.
      - b) Paul explains in 1 Cor. 7:39 that lawfully married people are bound until death. The same truth is taught in Rom. 7:2-3.
  - b. "Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife."

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- 1) Here Paul must have in mind those who are not governed by the bond of marriage. Those who would fall into this category would have to be:
    - a) Persons who have never married.
      - 1] Such persons have never been bound and thus are not bound presently.
    - b) Persons who have lost their spouse to death.
      - 1] According to Rom. 7:2-3 and 1 Cor. 7:39, the bond is broken and released when one mate dies.
    - c) Persons who have lawfully divorced their mate “for fornication.”
      - 1] By implication we understand in Mt. 19:9 that a person who divorces their mate for fornication is afforded the right to marry another lawfully.
      - 2] This right would depend upon the one who divorces their mate for fornication being released from the bond of marriage.
      - 3] Rom. 7:3 shows that if a person marries another while they are still bound to another, they are an adulterer.
      - 4] Since Jesus shows that one who puts away their mate for fornication can lawfully remarry, it is a necessary conclusion that such a person (the one who put away a guilty mate) is released from the bond of marriage.
  - 2) Such persons who may so qualify, should not – at that present time because of the present distress – seek a wife.
4. However, this is just Paul’s advice. If one marries in spite of the present distress, it is not sin.
    - a. While Paul would “spare you” “trouble in the flesh,” it is not sin to marry.
  5. Paul then speaks of this trouble to come.
    - a. He makes five interesting statements:
      - 1) Those who have wives should be as though they had none.
      - 2) Those who weep as though they did not weep.
      - 3) Those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice.
      - 4) Those who buy as though they did not possess.
      - 5) Those who use this world as not misusing it.
    - b. What does Paul mean by these statements?
      - 1) Whatever these things mean, they are surely written for this purpose as Paul notes in 1 Cor. 7:35:
        - a) “And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction.”
      - 2) From simple face-value observation we can observe the following:

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- a) There is a key figure of speech that continues through all five points. It is the phrase “as though.”
  - b) This figure of speech is not urging a literal change of condition. For example, the preceding verses tell us, “Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed.”
  - c) Thus Paul cannot be urging a literal change of marriage condition.
  - d) This phrase “as though” must be describing a figurative change.
- 3) In each case, the opposite condition is described. From having a wife, to having none, from weeping to not weeping, from rejoicing to not rejoicing, from possessing to not possessing, etc.
- c. Conclusions:
- 1) It appears to me that Paul is describing a time of upheaval and massive changes in society and life.
  - 2) As such, this is in keeping with Paul’s concern for the present distress.
  - 3) This seems to predict and warn of the coming trouble associated with a coming increase in persecution
    - a) As Rome began to persecute Christians, times would be very difficult.
    - b) Conditions would be such that those with wives would be as though they did not have wives, those grieving as though they could not grieve, those rejoicing as though they could not rejoice, those who possess as though they could not possess, and those who use this world’s things as though they could not
    - c) For example, perhaps those with wives would not be able to be with their wives due to persecutions and imprisonment, thus living as though they did not have wives. Sometimes grieving is so deep one cannot grieve any longer. Sometimes circumstances are so dire that rejoicing is not possible in what should be happy moments.
    - d) And in view of these terrible circumstances, Paul wants these Christians to not have extra cares.
- d. Alternative understandings:
- 1) Brother Mike Willis in his commentary, *First Corinthians*, says on page 206:
    - a) “Paul is, therefore, saying that in the time that remains those who have wives must live as if they did not have them, that is, they should learn to live in such a way that when the choice must be made between allegiance to Christ and family affection they will be able to choose Christ. Hence, Paul does not forbid marriage; instead he counsels that Christians must not let their allegiance to their mates interfere with their allegiance to Christ (cf. Lk. 14:26f).”
  - 2) However, brother Willis is understood to believe that Luke 14:26 and 18:29 provide authority for one to lawfully divorce their mate if some circumstance arises which one perceives makes it impossible to serve God in that marriage.
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- a) Examination of such a view is outside the scope of this study, but it will simply suffice to say that such a view is a terrible misunderstanding of these beautiful passages and puts them at odds with other clear teaching on divorce and remarriage, which condemns any divorce except for the cause of fornication.
6. After describing such upheaval, Paul then explains in vs. 33-34 the reasons for his concern.
- a. A married man focuses much attention on how to please his wife.
  - b. A married woman focuses much attention on how to please her husband.
  - c. An unmarried person, in the context of a great distress, is able to better focus on pleasing the Lord.
    - 1) Paul explains in vs. 35 that he wants them to be able to “serve the Lord without distraction.”
  - d. It is not hard to imagine the terrible persecution of Christians in the first century and the horrible impact it would have on husbands, wives and families.
    - 1) How many Christian men may be willing to face death themselves, but would be crushed by the prospect of watching their wife face death in the Roman Coliseum?
    - 2) How many Christian women might be willing to face their own death, but would collapse under the prospect of their children being harmed or taken from them.
  - e. In this terrible time, having a wife or husband might only add to the burden of persecution.
7. In verse 36-38 Paul provides a final summary:
- a. If they wish to marry, let them marry, there is no sin
    - 1) Paul says, “If any man thinks he is behaving improperly toward his virgin...”
      - a) Perhaps this has reference to an oft-repeated statement in this chapter:
        - 1] 1 Cor. 7:2: “Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife...”
        - 2] 1 Cor. 7:9: “...but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.”
        - 3] 1 Cor. 7:37: “...having no necessity, but has power over his own will, and has so determined in his heart that he will keep his virgin...”
      - b) Paul has often acknowledged the danger of sexual temptations to those who are not married. In verse 36 Paul is simply again acknowledging the danger.
    - 2) Paul also says, “...if she is past the flower of youth...”
      - a) Here the focus apparently is on the age of the betrothed (engaged) virgin.

- b) Perhaps a man feels he is unfair to delay or cancel marriage to this woman who has kept herself from others, but is now older and prospects for another marriage later on are poor.
- 3) In either case, marriage is not sinful.
- b. The one who has power over his will, does better.
  - 1) Again, because of the present distress and the terrible circumstances that will soon come upon Christians, the best choice is to be like Paul – unmarried.

#### B. The bond in a lawful marriage.

1. There is a bond that takes place in a lawful marriage. **“Bound”** here, as noted earlier in this outline is the Greek word *deo*.
2. Here and in Rom. 7:2-3 it is referred to as the bond “of law.”
3. Surely this has reference back to Christ’s teaching in Mt. 19:6:
  - a. “So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”
  - b. This passage connects to verses 4-5 which take us back to the beginning and remind us that in marriage man and woman were to become “one flesh.”
4. This bond, as noted in Rom. 7:2-3 lasts until the death of one of the marriage partners.
5. At such time of death, the surviving spouse can marry again if they so choose.
6. Again, in view of the preset distress, Paul discourages such in verse 40:
  - a. “But she is happier if she remains as she is, according to my judgment – and I think I also have the Spirit of God.”

#### C. Remarriage **“only in the Lord.”**

1. Paul says concerning a widow’s choices regarding future marriage:
  - a. “...but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.”
2. Does this phrase **“only in the Lord”** mean that she may marry anyone, as long as they are a Christian?
  - a. Sometimes the phrase, “in the Lord” seems to refer to people who are Christians:
    - 1) Rom. 16:11: “Greet Herodion, my countryman. Greet those who are of the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.”
      - a) That is, some or all of Narcissus’ household are “in the Lord” – that is, have fellowship with God.
  - b. Sometimes the phrase, “in the Lord” seems to be used to identify a realm that belongs to the Lord – as opposed to a realm that belongs to the physical:
    - 1) 1 Cor. 9:1: “Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?”
      - a) That is, the Corinthians were Paul’s work in the Lord’s realm, in the spiritual realm. This stands in contrast to Paul’s work in the physical realm of making tents.

- 2) 1 Thess. 5:12: “And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you.”
3. A full examination is beyond the scope of this outline, but my current understanding is that this passage is not restricting her choice of marriage partners to Christians, but rather is restricting her remarriage to the realm that belongs to the Lord – i.e. to that which is lawful.
  - a. If this passage is restricting a widow from marrying a non-Christian, we might ask some questions to explore the subject more fully:
    - 1) If in remarriage, a widow is restricted to marrying a Christian, then by implication is initial marriage to a non-Christian also unlawful? I am not aware of any plain prohibitions on initial marriage to a non-Christian.
    - 2) Would lawful marriage to another after divorcing one’s unfaithful spouse also be restricted to the selection of a Christian mate?
    - 3) If a person violates this passage and marries a non-Christian, what form must repentance take? Does it require divorce? If so, what role does 1 Cor. 7:12-13 play since it condemns putting away an unbelieving spouse?
    - 4) Of course, if it is true that God restricts remarriage of a Christian to only Christians, then we must comply without doubting.
    - 5) None of these questions or comments should be construed to recommend marriage to a non-Christian.
      - a) Surely such marriages can and will be more difficult.
      - b) Surely it is possible that at least some such marriages essentially create an unequal yoking together with an unbeliever (See 2 Cor. 6:14).
  - b. It seems therefore that this passage is restricting her choices in remarriage to the realm of God’s law, especially those parts of God’s law that Paul has just covered. Such constraints would include:
    - 1) Marrying only someone who has a right to be married (1 Cor. 7:10-11, Rom. 7:2-3, Mt. 19:9, etc.).
    - 2) Fulfilling the physical requirements of each spouse (1 Cor. 7:2-5).
    - 3) Maintaining a focus on the needs of your mate (1 Cor. 7:32-34)
    - 4) Submitting to one’s husband as God has commanded. In fact, this command in Col. 3:18 uses the same “in the Lord” phrase to describe the nature of her submission, “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.”
      - a) Paul is not commanding wives to submit to their own husbands “in the Lord” in order to tell them to only obey Christian husbands.
      - b) Rather, he is telling them that their submission to their husband is to be within God’s realm: that is in keeping with God’s will. But also, that they obey their husbands only so far as it does not require a violation of God’s will. Acts 5:29 also shows this principle.
  - c. In so doing, surely a widow would be marrying “in the Lord” – in keeping with His laws regarding marriage.

## V. Lessons for Us

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- A. Marital affection and the sexual relationship are not merely for reproduction but are also an important hedge against immorality.
  - B. The husband must focus on the needs of his wife.
  - C. The wife must focus on the needs of her husband.
  - D. Remaining single has certain advantages.
  - E. Sometimes rights and privileges should be put on hold because of problems around us.
  - F. There is to be no divorce short of the one condition taught by Jesus Christ.
  - G. If one does divorce, there must be reconciliation or the persons must remain unmarried.
  - H. Certain physical circumstances must be remained in after obedience to the Gospel.
  - I. Lawful marriage involves a bond that remains until death.

**Conclusion:**

- I. This chapter surely hit the Corinthians, and all of us, “very close to home.”
  - A. We gain answers and insights to questions of love, marriage, the sexual relationship and celibacy.
  - B. We learn more about the proper focus of marriage.
  - C. We learn that some physical conditions or duties do not change just because we obey the Gospel.
  - D. We learn that sometimes, in view of terrible trouble, we might forgo certain rights and privileges that God has given us. We learn that discretion in such matters is a necessity.
- II. In learning about these practical matters of daily living, surely we can better fulfill these divine commands:
  - A. Eph. 4:1: “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to *walk worthy* of the calling with which you were called.”
  - B. Col. 1:10: “that you may *walk worthy* of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”
  - C. 1 Thess. 2:12: “that you would *walk worthy* of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.”

David Watts Jr.  
7632 Gull Road,  
Gilmer, TX 75645  
davidwattsjr@gmail.com

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