

April 15, 2018

In chapter 7 we find Paul moving away from the “report” and beginning to address particular questions or topics about which the Corinthians had written.

1. It is possible that the same People who had brought the report had also brought a letter from the Corinthians. (perhaps mentioned in 16:17)
2. The first matter that Paul addresses may or may not have been the primary matter for which they had written. Regardless, the subject matter flows naturally from the the preceding two chapters. As such, I don't see a break in thought but rather a practical application for Paul's plea for the Corinthians to “flee sexual immorality (6:18)” and to “glorify God in your body (6:20).”
3. It is important to understand the Marriage options in those days
 - a. Tent companions: This is slave marriage
 - i. Mater could move or sell the man or woman at any time or take the woman as his own wife if he desired
 - ii. Many Christians were slaves and thus lived in this manner
 - b. Common Law marriage
 - i. If you lived together for a year or more you were considered married
 - c. Arranged Marriage
 - i. Fathers sold their daughters to profit the family
 - d. Standard Marriage
4. Also important to understand the doctrine which prompted these questions
 - a. Many coming from a Gentile background were championing singleness and celibacy as true spirituality. The thinking was that to deny the flesh was to be be truly spiritual. Since gentile worship was so often focused on indulging the flesh there was a tendency toward the asceticism or self denial.
 - b. From the Jewish context Marriage was seen as obligatory to following the commands of the OT. Jews were expected to marry

1. Observation (vs 1):
 - a. “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman”
 - i. The literal reading is “it is good for a man not to *touch* a woman”
 1. This is a Jewish euphemism for being married and all that is implied within the marriage context
 - a. Euphemisms are used to mellow or show discretion for a topic that is taboo
 2. This does not mean that it is forbidden from hugging your grandmother, or shake hands with someone you've just been introduced to
 - ii. What is in question here is whether christians should participate in or refrain from marriage.
 - b. Paul's stance on the matter simply is yes, it is good not to marry

- i. The logic for this response is given in vs 32ff and is simple: married people have divided interests.
 - c. It is important here to note that when Paul agrees that it is good not to marry he is **NOT** saying it is bad to marry.
 - i. For him to say this would be to go against the rest of the bible's stance, including his own in Eph 5, toward marriage
 - ii. We must not make the bible say more than it does
 - 1. Nowhere in this passage is Paul negative toward Marriage
 - 2. He is simply very practical in his approach to the matter
 - 3. Calvin in his commentary on this passage give this example:
 - a. Let us explain this by a comparison. Should any one speak in this way: "It were good for a man not to eat, or to drink, or to sleep" -- he would not thereby condemn eating, or drinking, or sleeping, as things that were wrong -- but as the time that is devoted to these things is just so [369] much taken from the soul, his meaning would be, that we would be happier if we could be free from these hindrances, and devote ourselves wholly [370] to meditation on heavenly things. Hence, as there are in married life many impediments which keep a man entangled, it were on that account good not to be connected in marriage.
 - d. If you were to ask Paul, "What do you say, Paul, should we marry or refrain from marrying?" he would answer "Yes."
2. Clarification vs 2
 - a. Paul here is not making a comment on the purpose of Marriage, why it was instituted.
 - i. His understanding of the high purpose of Marriage is given in Eph 5:32
 - ii. But marriage does have many benefits that are rooted in it "Purpose of being a Picture"
 - 1. Procreation - Gen. 1:28
 - 2. Pleasure in Marriage - Prov. 5, Song of Solomon
 - 3. Partnership - Gen 2:18
 - 4. Purity - 1 Cor 7:2
 - b. Marriage does not take immoral acts and makes them right. Marriage is moral and therefore acts between a husband and wife are moral and pure. Heb 13:4
 - i. But we must be careful because marriage is not licence to fulfill sexual fantasy.
 - 1. There is a invasive idea in the church today that says marriage makes all sexual whims and fantasies pure because they are indulged in within the confines of marriage. This is wrong

- a. E.g. If we watch riskay or pornografic seans together its okay
 - b. If we use our bodies in unnatural ways it is okay because we protected by marriage
 - 2. Your marriage bed is to be kept pure not only from other people but from yourself. Other instructions in scripture don't go out the window just because you are married
 - a. Verses like Philip 4:8 still apply
 - b. Purity will produce arousal
 - c. Note also that Paul leaves no room for polygamy in his statement.
 - d. Paul is saying that Marriage is the legitimate context for sexual relation
- 3. Obligation vs 3-4
 - a. We each have something we are obligated to give
 - i. It is likely that married corinthians were thinking they would be more holy were keeping themselves from their partner.
 - 1. There is no place for celibacy within marriage
 - b. We cannot think of this in terms of rights but rather as duty
 - i. If you read this and hear that your husband or wife owes you something by right you have missed the point.
 - ii. Paul is telling you that you have a duty to them - your only right is the right to give yourself to your spouse.
 - c. This is to be a regular thing
 - i. Present continuous action - means it happening now and will continue into the indefinite future.
 - d. Paul points out that in marriage you gave up the autonomous right to yourself
 - i. You are accountable for yourself but not for yourself alone
 - ii. In marriage 1+1=1
 - 1. Practical application:
 - a. be attractive to one another. Don't worship at the altar of self beautification but also don't give up on your appearance because you have a ring on your finger
- 4. Deprivation vs 5
 - a. Sex in marriage is never to be leveraged
 - i. We are not to withhold marital relations from one another
 - ii. A marriage that is sexless is a marriage that has deep flaws
 - 1. Sexual intimacy is meant to be the pinnacle expression of affection between a husband and a wife. If it's not happening there are going to be reasons why
 - b. There is only one scenario give by Paul for a sexless marriage
 - i. Both agree - Mutual consent
 - ii. Limited time

- iii. For the purpose of prayer
- iv. Immediate reinstatement
- c. Concession vs 6-7
 - i. Both marriage and celibacy are a gift from God
 - 1. You are expected to use your gift for the glory of God
 - a. Single people how are you living?
 - i. Are you moping around watching hallmark films and reading romance novels longing for mr or miss Right to come along and save you from yourself?
 - ii. Are you viewing pornography, stimulating physical arousal and engaging in self sex to specify your longings
 - iii. Or are you surrendering your singleness to your Christ saying thank you for this gift that i might server you without distraction
 - b. Married couples are you glorifying God in your bodies by giving yourself regularly to your wife or husband in a way that says to them “you and I are one and your happiness brings me joy, so I’m going to give myself to you, rejoicing in the gift of our marriage.”

Discussion Questions:

1. Why does Paul say it is good that a Christian does not marry? Does this statement surprise you? In making such a statement is Paul also saying that it is bad if a Christian marries?
2. Have you ever thought about marital relations as obligatory? How does the distinction between duty and right affect our approach to the marriage bed? How does that distinction influence other areas of life?
3. Have you ever been guilty of depriving your spouse of Marital affection- physical or otherwise? Why would Paul warn against this? Does the bridegroom of souls ever withhold affection from us?
4. If you are single, do you ever struggle to see your singleness as a gift? How about if you are married? How would believing your current relationship status to be a gift from God benefit you and the kingdom of God?