

“Concerning” Marriage: “God Hath Called Us to Peace”

1 Corinthians 7:10-16

The context goes to what may be the answer to a second question regarding marriage or was something the Apostle Paul saw or heard that had the potential to damage the testimony of the church and the cause of Christ in Corinth (or both). Upon dealing with the basics in marriage (and in single life), he now addresses more directly those that were married and counsels them to remain that way. He lays out some important points for then and now relating to the family, and how important it is for the family unit to stay a unit, even in the face of difficult circumstances.

The text for these verses deals with the issue of “peace” (vs. 15) – peace in the home that begins with peace in the heart and life of the believer. We can and will do nothing without the “peace of God” – and we cannot have the “peace of God” until we have “peace with God,” and that can only be done through faith in Christ. If there is no “peace with God” in the home, then there will be no peace of any account until there is. The issue of “peace” is seen in what it is NOT – it is not war and dissension. It is not division and contrast. It is the opposite of those things.

Philippians 4:7

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

In order to have the peace of God in our lives, we need to follow principles found in Scripture. It’s more

than the “thou shalt” and the “thou shalt not” – it’s all the counsel of God, which the pastor/teacher is obligated to teach.

Acts 20:27

²⁷ For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

If we, as those gifted and directed to teach the Word of God do our job then the church will have the knowledge to do what is needed in getting the gospel to the world.

I. THE STANDARD OF SCRIPTURE – VS. 10-11

A. The first two verses of our text give the standard to follow – the mark to aim for, so to speak.

B. “Unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord”

1. To those that were currently married – they were not to seek to be free from their marriage or their vows, even if it would free them to serve the Lord with more vigor and time. That would violate already established principles of Scripture, and Paul wouldn’t do that.
2. “The Lord” commanded this point and it is what sets the standard of biblical principle for marriage – if married, divorce is not the option one should choose.
3. Paul is referring to the teaching of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels (which referenced Old Testament teachings, and as was pointed out in the last text, it would violate

the basic Bible principle of one man, one woman, for life).

Matthew 5:31–32

31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:

32 But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

Matthew 19:6–9

6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?

8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

Malachi 2:14–16

14 Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.

15 And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore

take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.

¹⁶ For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

4. Although there is an allowance by Jesus, because of sin, the principle of marriage for life has always been, and will always be, God's design.

C. "Let not the wife depart from her husband...and let not the husband put away his wife"

1. "Depart" and "put away" are euphemisms for divorce in the context of this passage.
2. This was not common, and in historical context of the Old Testament and the rabbinical teachings, was not even allowed among Jewish women.

"No protection is afforded the wife except against hasty action on her husband's part. The right to divorce rests solely with the husband. The wife has no right to divorce her husband, and she has no appeal from his decision to any higher authority" (Ernest De Witt Burton – The Biblical World).

3. The laws of Rome were much more liberal than the Jewish laws, and in fact, were much more liberal than in most of the world today.

“By the first century B.C., either spouse could divorce the other or they could agree mutually to divorce. Since marrying another person was an indication that someone considered him or herself divorced from a previous spouse, bigamy was impossible.”

<https://news.stanford.edu/pr/91/911203Arc1041.html>

D. “But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband”

1. Although this is speaking to the wife, based on the next phrase in the verse, it is also relevant for the husband – it applies to both equally.
2. This is the standard – if a divorce does happen, even if it is on biblically allowed grounds (fornication, adultery), the wife or husband should remain unmarried.
 - a) Some teach this is only true for the wife because it isn’t stated for the husband but that would be applying a standard of interpretation to this text that doesn’t apply.
 - b) Let it be said here (again) – this is not an all-inclusive teaching on marriage and divorce. This is only dealing (in the next portion) with a specific issue in the church at Corinth).
 - c) The simple truth is, God hates divorce and even though He allows for certain aspects of it to take place, it is still not His ultimate

will or purpose.

II. THE SPECIFICS OF THE ISSUE – VS. 12-13

A. "But to the rest speak I, not the Lord"

1. "The rest" – "perhaps in respect of their *letter of enquiry*, - the *only ones not yet dealt with*. At all events, the meaning is plain, being those who are involved in mixed marriages with unbelievers" (Alford).
2. "Speak I, not the Lord" – "Paul has no word about marriage from Jesus beyond the problem of divorce. This is no disclaimer of inspiration. He simply means that here he is not quoting a command of Jesus" (Robertson).

B. Vs. 12b-13 – the specific issue dealt with is that of marriage to an unbelieving spouse.

1. This may be because one spouse received Christ after their marriage (which is most likely the case, considering the context of the newness of the church in Corinth), or one was saved at the time of marriage.
2. The teaching here is fairly simple and straightforward – just because one is not saved is not justification, in any way, for the husband to divorce his wife, or for the wife to divorce her husband. If the marriage is on good ground, even if one is not saved, the marriage should stay as it is, and as will be seen later, it may be that the unbelieving spouse may come to Christ

because of the testimony of the believer.

3. NOTE: There is a disturbing trend in our society today that is worth noting: women initiate nearly 70 percent of all divorces (from a study done in 2015 - <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-new-resilience/201508/women-initiate-divorce-much-more-men-heres-why>).

The significance to that statistic as it relates to this text, and to the overall teaching of Scripture, is that it shows the failure of the biblical family unit, and a failure of each spouse to follow the order of spouses given in the Bible. It is not politically correct today, and it is not culturally relevant to many, but it is still truth. God put the husband as the head of the home and will hold both husband and wife accountable to that principle.

Conclusion to this point: As will be seen in the final verse of our text, the whole of the point of all this teaching on marriage and family is that souls might be saved. Too often we, as individual believers, and we, as a local body of believers (the church), get in the way of the Holy Spirit and quench His work. We fight and bicker and criticize and argue about things of little or no value.

If we, as spiritual, would teach those that are less spiritual the truth of the Word of God and allow the Holy Spirit to work in their lives the church, and the cause of Christ, would be stronger for it in every way. That teaching begins in the leadership of the home.

[Galatians 6:1](#)

¹ Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

III. THE SANCTITY WITHIN THE MARRIAGE – VS. 14

A. "Sanctity" is defined as holiness; state of being sacred or holy (1828 Webster's). The word for "sanctified" (αγιάζω) in this verse is one that means to make holy, to render pure or clean (it is that last portion that is applicable in this verse).

B. "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife..."

1. They are not sanctified as to salvation for that would certainly violate the more clear and relevant texts about each person being accountable for themselves to God for salvation.

Ezekiel 18:20

²⁰ The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

Jeremiah 31:29–30

²⁹ In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge.

³⁰ But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his

teeth shall be set on edge.

Romans 14:12

¹² So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

2. Robertson puts it this way: "Clearly he only means that the marriage relation is sanctified so that there is no need of a divorce. If either husband or wife is a believer and the other agrees to remain, the marriage is holy and need not be set aside. This is so simple that one wonders at the ability of men to get confused over Paul's language."
3. Following is an excerpt from a book by Paul Jewitt entitled *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace* (as found on <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/sanctifying-unbelieving-spouses>):

According to the interpretation we shall suggest, in 1 Corinthians 7:14 Paul has in view the sanctity of lawful matrimony and the purity of the resulting offspring. When he says that the unbeliever is "sanctified" by the believer, he is simply referring to the marriage covenant by which the unbeliever has been consecrated and set apart for the exclusive fellowship of the believer in the bond of marriage. He writes to assure his Corinthian converts that this exclusive propriety, which the marriage covenant seals, is in no way abrogated by any disparity of religious commitment, great as this disparity may be. Christians, then, should never fear defilement through cohabitation with an unbelieving

spouse: indeed, such defilement would imply that their children were also defiled, which they grant is not the case. In other words, he reasons from what is allowed to what is in doubt. If that relationship were unclean from which the children came, then the children would be unclean too; but everyone agrees they are not. Rather, they are "holy" in the sense that they are not contaminated with the taint of illegitimacy. Therefore, the union of which they were born is likewise above suspicion and reproach.

4. Simply put, as the question arose in the church at Corinth on marriage and singleness (celibacy), Paul is pointing out that marriage, even between a saved and lost person, is still holy and pure in God's eyes and does not need to be "undone" by divorce because of it.

C. "Else were your children unclean; but now are they holy"

1. Robertson says this: "since, accordingly, if it is otherwise, your children are illegitimate. If the relations of the parents be holy, the child's birth must be holy also (not illegitimate).
2. This verse is the primary one used for infant baptism, and for the belief that that makes a child a believer until they reach the age of accountability. That is in no way what this text teaches. It has nothing to do with soul salvation at all – it is simply stating (in language of the day that the

Corinthians would have understood completely) that the children born to that type of mixed marriage were not born illegitimately.

D. Vs. 15 – “if the unbelieving depart, let him depart” – pretty self-explanatory – if they choose to leave (and are not encouraged to do so), then the believing spouse is to let them leave

E. “A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases”

1. This is perhaps the most difficult part of this entire text to interpret – and apply.

2. The word used here (δουλόω) is one that simply means to enslave, to be a slave, to serve.

“To make a slave of, reduce to bondage; metaph. give myself wholly to one's needs and service, make myself a bondman to him” (Outline of Biblical Usage) – “to be under bondage, held by constraint of law or necessity, in some matter” (Thayer).

3. In the context here, and considering the usage of the word, it can really only mean one thing as it relates to marriage – if the unbelieving depart (seeks divorce) the believer is to let them go, and once they are separated, the marriage bond is broken and they are not bound to the vows taken therein.

4. “The meaning clearly is that willful desertion on the part of the unbelieving

husband or wife sets the other party free. Such cases are not comprehended in Christ's words" (Vincent).

5. "The believing husband or wife is not at liberty to separate, unless the disbeliever or pagan insists on it. Willful desertion of the unbeliever sets the other free, a case not contemplated in Christ's words in Matt. 5:32; Matt. 19:9. Luther argued that the Christian partner, thus released, may marry again. But that is by no means clear, unless the unbeliever marries first" (Robertson).
6. There is a case to be made that the release from the marriage vows in divorce is the same as if the spouse has died but that, as Robertson points out, is by no means clear in this text nor any other, for that matter. It is still best, if the marriage ends in divorce, to remain unmarried (and that is what Paul is saying here in the overall context).

F. "But God hath called us to peace"

Romans 12:18

¹⁸ If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

1. Or, God has called us "in peace" – it is because of the peace we have with Him as believers that we can have peace or be "in peace" (resting or residing in) with others – especially our spouse.
2. Again, the best thing we can do is stay with our spouse and keep our vows. The

exception here is that if it will be better for one's spiritual relationship with the Lord, and for the sake of peace in the family, if they depart let them go.

IV. THE SALVATION OF THE LOST – vs. 15-16

A. *"What knowest thou...? The placement of this verse following the one on the unbelieving spouse leaving (either with a simple separation or divorce) makes this mean something a bit different than what most interpret.*

1. The interpretation most often attributed to this text is that the believing spouse should stay in the marriage in hopes of seeing the nonbelieving spouse saved. Although this is part of it, taking into account what is said in verse 10-11, that is not the primary point being made.
2. The placement of this immediately following the issue of being called "to [or, in] peace" indicates that there may be cause to allow a separation to take place in order for there to be amicability between the spouses and allow that peace that ensues to open opportunity for further testimony of (and to) salvation; as well as to allow for the believing spouse to live in peace and serve the Lord.

"What knowest thou but that by staying with thy unbelieving partner thou mayest save him or her? Enforcing the precept to stay with the unbelieving consort (1 Corinthians 7:12-14). So Ruth the

Moabitess became a convert to her husband's faith: and Joseph and Moses probably gained over their wives. So conversely the unbelieving husband may be won by the believing wife (1 Peter 3:1) [Calvin]. Or else (1 Corinthians 7:15), if thy unbelieving consort wishes to depart, let him go, so that thou mayest live "in peace": for thou canst not be sure of converting him, so as to make it obligatory on thee at all costs to stay with him against his will [Menochius and Alford].

"There is no problem at all unless the unbeliever makes it. If it is a hopeless case, acquiescence is the only wise solution. But surely the believer ought to be sure that there is no hope before he agrees to break the bond." (Robertson)

B. "Whether thou shalt save [husband or wife]?"

1. This is not speaking of soul-salvation – no one has the ability (outside of Christ Himself) to save anyone else.
2. The word "save" here is used with the idea of conversion – the believing spouse being the instrument used by the Holy Spirit in the conversion.

James 5:20

²⁰ Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

Conclusion: No matter what our view is of this whole passage, the one thing to focus attention on is that of our testimony, as a believer, needs to be such as to have an influence on those around us – especially our family. It is imperative that we live the way a Christian should at all times – at home where everyone knows us best, and while outside the home (consistency is the key) – in order to have the greatest impact for Christ that we can have.

Ones' marriage should be that way. We have been called to peace – sometimes that means we have to allow things to happen that aren't ideal for both the benefit of the other party, as well as for the peace we need in life to live as we should. Follow the Holy Spirit's leading in those situations and He will guide.