

“Concerning” Marriage: “So Let Him Walk”

1 Corinthians 7:17-24

Although this is a continuation of the previous text on marriage (part of the same paragraph, according to some Greek scholars), this can be seen as a type of parenthetical or, at the very least, a text that steps outside of a specific context or issue and can be broadly applied. “The apostle here introduces a new subject; or an inquiry varying somewhat from that preceding, though of the same general nature. He had discussed the question whether a husband and wife ought to be separated on account of a difference in religion. He now says that the general principle there stated ought to rule everywhere; that people who become Christians ought not to seek to change their condition or calling in life, but to remain in that situation in which they were when they became Christians, and show the excellence of their religion in that particular calling. The object of Paul, therefore, is to preserve order, industry, faithfulness in the relations of life, and to show that Christianity does not design to break up the relations of social and domestic contact.”

Each of these areas are critically important to the life of the church. If marital status (whether married or single) is right in relation to Scripture and the Lord, then the church will be the better for it. If our walk with the Lord is right in the church we are in, in our “religious” life, then the ministry of the Lord and the cause of the gospel will be unhindered by the “politics” of religion. If the believer will consider his position in the workplace, whether a simple laborer or management, as a place they can use to demonstrate Christ to those around them, and be a testimony even in the more difficult of

circumstances, then the home and the church and even the nation will benefit and be blessed."

So, for those that say their marriage and their home life is none of the church's concern and will have no affect on anything else either is greatly misled or simply choosing to do whatever they want without any regard of the consequences.

I. WALK RIGHT IN "EVERYTHING" – VS. 17

A. This is the broad rule – the basic principle that is to guide the believer through life in every area (those spoken of in this text – marriage, church, work). This is something that the Apostle Paul taught in all the churches in which he had an influence.

B. Encompassed within this verse is the issue of marriage, considering the greater context. God called us to be faithful and walk with Him, no matter the status of our marriage – either single or married to a non-believer or married to a believer. Whatever the status of our relationship, we are to "walk" right with God.

C. "But" – what follows is contrasted with what preceded, as well as steps outside that particular context to present a broader principle.

1. This particular English word translated "but" is from two Greek words - εἰ, if; and μή, not. Often translated "save," "except" in addition to "but."
2. "But" – "only be careful not to make this a ground for yourselves causing the

separation (Alford).

3. "But" – "only – Paul gives a general principle as a limitation to what he has just said in verse 15" (Robertson).
4. "But" – "literally, if not. The phrase introduces a caution (Pulpit Commentary).

D. "As God hath distributed to every man"

1. It is God that does the giving, the gifting, as He sees fit. We are to simply trust Him to give us whatever we need to accomplish His will in our lives.

Matthew 19:12

12 For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

1 Peter 4:10-11

10 As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

11 If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

2. "Hath distributed"
 - a) Aorist, active, infinitive – points to a particular time (in this case, in the past), and establishes a thing as factual or true. God, at the point of salvation, gifted us with

what we needed to do His will. Within that gifting, within the context of 1 Cor. 7, if one was married when they got saved, they were to work to stay that way; if they were single, they were not to work to change that status unless God directed.

b) "Distributed"

(1) The word for "distributed" is translated in other versions as "given" (BBE), "assigned" (ESV, NIV, NASB, and others), "placed" (NLT), etc.

(2) The word means to divide, to part, to share; to separate into parts. A good way to understand its meaning is in the word "apportioned."

(3) We have not all been given equal parts – whether it be in marriage, or in our lives in the church, or in life generally. We have been given differing abilities and gifts for the sake of the cause of Christ (a truth we will consider in greater length later in our study of First Corinthians).

Romans 12:3–8

³ For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

⁴ For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

⁵ So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

⁶ Having then gifts differing according

to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

⁷ Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;

⁸ Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

3. "To every man" – not gender specific – this is the same Greek word translated "every one" in the next clause.

E. "As the Lord hath called every one"

1. There are differing opinions on this clause.
 - a) Some keep it in the strict context of chapter seven – marriage. If we are called to be married, stay that way; if we are called to be single, stay that way. This does not fit what follows, nor does it fit the overall view of what the Holy Spirit is teaching.
 - b) Some consider the calling here to be that of salvation (and that is part of it but not all of it).
 - c) The best understanding, within the context of the passage, as well as fitting within the context of Scripture as a whole, this clause relates to the next – "so let him walk." We are called by God, in salvation, to walk as a believer should – we are predestined "to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29).

"Calling" here must not be regarded in the modern sense of profession or condition of life; it is nowhere so used in the New

Testament, but always signifies God calling to us (see Rom. 11:29; Eph. 1:18). Continue to be Christians of the kind which God's call to Christianity made you. If you were circumcised, and so God's call into the Christian Church made you a circumcised Christian, continue so; don't do anything which would seem to imply, that some other change in addition to your call was necessary to complete your admission to the Church." Understanding the "calling" here, as I do, to be personal religion, or Christliness, which is elsewhere called the "heavenly calling," Paul's advice to abide in that state, in whatever relationship or condition we are found, is intelligible and right. (Pulpit commentary)

Romans 11:29

29 For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

Ephesians 1:18

18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

2. Again, we see it is the Lord that does the calling. Notice the change from "God" to "Lord." This is not just for readability – He is not only our God, in the general sense, putting the call on us, gifting us; He is our "Lord" – our Master, the One to whom we are accountable.
3. "Every one" – no matter who we are: male or female, young or old, Jew or Gentile, bond or free – we are called to walk with the Lord.

Galatians 3:26–29

²⁶ For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

²⁷ For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

²⁹ And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

F. "So let him walk"

1. The NIV reads, "should live as a believer" – this gives a good understanding of the clause. The ESV reads, "lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him" – another good rendering.
2. "So" – in that state, without change (Alford)
3. "Let him walk"
 - a) All one word in the Greek (περιπατέω) – a word that is made up of two parts: the first (περι), which means through, all over, around; and the second (πατέω), meaning to trample or tread. Together, literally they mean to tread all around, to walk at large (especially as proof of ability); figuratively to live, deport oneself... (Strong).
 - b) This could be seen as "to be at large, to be obvious" – our Christian walk is to be out in the open where it can be seen and judged as to whether it is "worthy" of the name of Christ.

[Ephesians 4:1-3](#)

¹ I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the

vocation wherewith ye are called,

² With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

³ Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

1 Thessalonians 4:1

¹ Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.

1 Thessalonians 4:11–12

¹¹ And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;

¹² That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.

- c) As it says in Ephesians 4:1, the believer is to “walk worthy” – the “everything” principle taught in this verse in First Corinthians is summed up in that clause – we are to walk worthy, deserving, of the name “Christian,” and the church, as a whole, representing Christ on earth, is also to “walk worthy” of the calling to be a church.

Examples of those that walked “worthy” in Scripture:

(1) *Enoch – Gen. 5:24*

Genesis 5:24

²⁴ And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.

(2) *Abraham – Gen. 17:1*

Genesis 17:1

¹ And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

(3) *The early church members – Acts 9:31*

Acts 9:31

³¹ Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

(4) *Paul and Timothy – Phil. 3:17-21*

Philippians 3:17–18

¹⁷ Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

¹⁸ (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:

Conclusion: Where are you in you in your walk with the Lord? Have you abandoned your walk for the sake of the world, or for the sake of pleasing others?

Christians are not differentiated from other people by country, language or customs; you see, they do not live in cities of their own, or speak some strange dialect, or have some peculiar lifestyle.

This teaching of theirs has not been contrived by the invention and speculation of inquisitive men; nor are they propagating mere human teaching as some people do. They

live in both Greek and foreign cities, wherever chance has put them. They follow local customs in clothing, food and the other aspects of life. But at the same time, they demonstrate to us the wonderful and certainly unusual form of their own citizenship.

They live in their own native lands, but as aliens; as citizens, they share all things with others; but like aliens, suffer all things. Every foreign country is to them as their native country, and every native land as a foreign country.

They marry and have children just like every one else; but they do not kill unwanted babies. They offer a shared table, but not a shared bed. They are at present "in the flesh" but they do not live "according to the flesh". They are passing their days on earth, but are citizens of heaven. They obey the appointed laws, and go beyond the laws in their own lives.

They love every one, but are persecuted by all. They are unknown and condemned; they are put to death and gain life. They are poor and yet make many rich. They are short of everything and yet have plenty of all things. They are dishonored and yet gain glory through dishonor.

Their names are blackened and yet they are cleared. They are mocked and bless in return. They are treated outrageously and behave respectfully to others. When they do good, they are punished as evildoers; when punished, they rejoice as if being given new life. They are attacked by Jews as aliens, and are persecuted by Greeks; yet those who hate them cannot give any Reason for their hostility.

To put it simply -- the soul is to the body as Christians are to the world. The soul is spread through all parts of the body and

Christians through all the cities of the world. The soul is in the body but is not of the body; Christians are in the world but not of the world.

-- From an anonymous letter to Diognetus, possibly dating from the second century.

II. WALK RIGHT ECCLESIASTICALLY – VS. 18-20

A. What is in view in these verses, within the context of the letter to the Corinthians is one of Jew and Gentile ("circumcision" and "uncircumcision"). If a person in Corinth came to Christ as a Jew it was not necessary for them to seek to undo their Jewish bond and heritage – they could still serve the Lord in that relationship (circumcision held no legal bond any longer). If they came to Christ as a Gentile, it was not necessary they become circumcised in order to be right with God (that was for a specific time period).

1. "The Jews, after their conversion, were to continue Jews, if they would. Christianity required no change in these outward things. Paul circumcised Timothy, and used Jewish customs. It was not the duty of a Christian to overthrow the Jewish system, but to throw into it a Christian feeling. Let us apply this to modern duties. The great desire among men now appears to be to alter, and so have perfect institutions, as if they would make perfect men. Mark the difference between this feeling and that of the apostle (verse 20). No man will get true rest for his soul in these days of controversy, until he has

learned the significance of these wise words.” (Biblical Illustrator)

2. A sect of Judaism called the “Judaizers” were following Paul from place to place sowing discord among the churches, requiring circumcision as essential to salvation.
3. Acts 15 describes the first church council where this issue was addressed and settled – so Paul is addressing that here in relation to a believer’s walk with the Lord. Circumcision never did save anyone – it was given to Abraham (and his seed) to show they were different than those around them – that God had separated them unto Himself. That no longer is necessary since our walk with the Lord is demonstrated by our keeping all the commandments of the Lord – not just one.

Acts 15:24

²⁴ Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment:

Acts 15:28–29

²⁸ For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;

²⁹ That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.

B. Applied in a broader way for the believer today - when it comes to a right standing

with God, and specifically, when it comes to the church and our position in the world, keeping rituals (in our text, circumcision or uncircumcision) has no value to biblical spiritualism – the only thing of real value in our relationship with the Lord is “keeping of the commandments of God.”

C. The church one attends is important as to the truth and doctrine that is being taught from the Word of God. If it isn't in line with Scripture, the church needs to be abandoned for one that is. This text does not refute that principle. What this does do, however, is show that if a church is doctrinally sound and biblically based and teaches the truth in love, then the things they do that others do not is not relevant to anything other than personal conviction – what matters is obedience.

D. There are two other verses (both in Galatians) that are relevant to this text – they act as commentary to this passage. There is a progression in these three texts:

[Galatians 5:1](#)

¹ Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

[Galatians 5:6](#)

⁶ For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

[Galatians 6:14–15](#)

¹⁴ But God forbid that I should glory, save in the

cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

¹⁵ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

1. Ecclesiastical position has no value if there is no "faith which worketh by love." Being brought up in church, being baptized as a baby, going through any catechism classes – none of that has any value if there is no saving faith.

The faith that saves is a faith, then, that produces works of love toward God, and toward others. A faith that does not produce any change in a person, that does not produce love in a person, is a meaningless faith, a powerless faith.

[James 2:17](#)

¹⁷ Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

"Faith in Christ reveals itself to be true and genuine by a sincere love to God and our neighbor. If they had this, it mattered not whether they were circumcised or uncircumcised, but without it nothing else would stand them in any stead...Faith where it is true is a working grace. It works by love, love to God and to our brethren." (Matthew Henry Study Bible)

2. That "faith which worketh by love" demonstrates that we are a "new creature" (Gal. 6:15). If there is no faith, there is no new creation. Our position in church means nothing if there is no true biblical conversion.

2 Corinthians 5:17

¹⁷ Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

3. That faith that results in a new creation is then outwardly expressed in a believer's right walk both in their personal life as well as in the corporate church body (the text of 1 Cor. 7), seen in their keeping of "the commandments of God."

Romans 2:28-29

²⁸ For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

²⁹ But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

E. Too many times the church has gone down a path that leads away from the Word of God, and specifically, His commandments (those that are still applicable today).

There is a passage in the Gospels where Jesus was teaching on this very topic. It happened close to the end of His earthly ministry and was something very important for the Apostles, and, as will be seen, very important for us today as well.

John 14:15

¹⁵ If ye love me, keep my commandments.

John 14:21

²¹ He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth

me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

John 14:23-24

²³ Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

²⁴ He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

NOTE: These notes are from a message I preached here in July of 2016 from the passage in John, but it bears repeating at this point for the context of First Corinthians.

1. "If" – conditional word – indicates that they could actually not love Him
2. Our love is demonstrated by our obedience – if we don't obey it would indicate we don't love
3. We ought to be glad that God's love for us is unconditional
4. Three times in this passage the point is made by Jesus that love is proven by keeping His commands, His words
 - a) Vs. 15 – we show our love for the Lord by keeping his commandments – the word "keep" means to keep an eye on, to guard – comes from a word often used for the warden or guard of a prison – we are to be ever-vigilant of the commandments of the Word of God
 - b) Vs. 21 goes a bit further – Jesus tells them that "he that hath my commandments" – that is, they aren't just a head knowledge, but they are written upon the heart

- c) Vs. 23-24 goes even further – Jesus simply states that if we truly love Him, we “will keep” His words
5. There’s a very similar verse in 1 John 5:3 that needs to be seen here – it will help us understand this verse a little better
- a) “This” – refers to what’s to follow, namely, “that we keep his commandments”
 - b) “Is the love of God” – not the love God has for us but the love we have for Him
 - c) “That we keep his commandments” – not only the commandments regarding love as mentioned earlier in this passage, but all the commandments that are found in the Bible that apply to us (not all of them apply to the church-age saints)
 - d) “His commandments are not grievous” – hard to be borne, oppressive – refers to the principle that His laws, His commandments are not unreasonable, the duties which they require of us are not beyond our abilities to bear

Psalm 19:7-11

⁷ The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

⁸ The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

⁹ The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

¹⁰ More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

¹¹ Moreover by them is thy servant

warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.

Proverbs 3:13-17

13 Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.

14 For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

15 She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.

16 Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour.

17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

Matthew 11:28-30

28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Conclusion to this point: How are we at “the keeping of the commandments of God?” Does our walk in Christ show that we are a Christian? Does our desire to keep His commandments determine where we will serve Him corporately in church or are you here because of tradition or convenience? A critically important thing, when it comes to our walk with the Lord as part of the body of Christ is that we keep His commandments – that we walk holy with and in Him.

III. WALK RIGHT IN EMPLOYMENT – VS. 21-24

Too many believers have a poor testimony at

their place of employment – whether they are in ownership, management, or a simple laborer. Our testimony in the workplace is as important, if not more so, than our testimony just about anywhere else. If we live like a non-believer while at work, how much of an influence do you think we will have when given the opportunity to present Christ to those we work with? You might think your work life, home life, and spiritual are somehow separate entities and that you can live how you like at any given time – that is a common misconception and practice that will almost always end in ruin.

Even though the Apostle is here directing the church (and, specifically, the leadership of the church as they teach the people) in matters concerning marriage and the family, he seems careful (by inspiration of the Holy Spirit) to venture into the area of workplace related life because of the impact it has on every other area of life, including the home life.

The overall truth presented here is that no matter our position in the workplace, we are to consider our testimony and how we represent Christ. If we were saved while working a seeming menial job, with no prestige or glamor, then that is where we are to stay and represent Christ until He says otherwise. If we are in management or business ownership, we are not to seek to change that status until God says otherwise. Many times men and women have answered a call that God did not give to go into some full-time Christian service because of a preacher or something they felt like doing and all the while God intended to use them for the cause of the gospel right where they were, and inevitably that move on their part ended badly and all too often people like that end up put on a shelf and useless to God.

So, according to this text (and, as with the other

areas dealt with here, this is not all-encompassing in its presentation of truth), how do we “walk right in employment?”

**A. *Stay where you are until God moves you*
– vs. 21**

1. This is speaking in particular to those that were saved in the city of Corinth while they were slaves. There were many slaves and slave owners, as well as those that were simply “freemen” – irrespective of their position in the work force. No matter what one’s position was when they got saved, they were to remain in that position (as long as it did not violate Scripture or scriptural principles) until such time as God gave them opportunity to change.
2. There is an illustration of this in the story of Philemon. Philemon, a believer who owned at least one slave (Onesimus), was counseled by Paul to receive Onesimus back as both a servant and a brother in Christ and if he owed Philemon anything (either back wages or something from outright theft), Philemon was to charge that to Paul’s account and he would settle up with him at a later time. It is unclear whether Onesimus was a believer before he left Philemon, or became one after, it is clear that he was to go back and continue in that position until the Lord gave him liberty to do something else.

Philemon 10–21

¹⁰ I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds:

¹¹ Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and

to me:

12 Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels:

13 Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel:

14 But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly.

15 For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever;

16 Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?

17 If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself.

18 If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account;

19 I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides.

20 Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord.

21 Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say.

3. "Art thou called" – called to salvation, yes, but, more to the point of the context, called to walk right in Christ – called, set apart for the purpose of representing Christ in our life.
4. "Being a servant" – a slave, involuntarily or voluntarily. For application today, this

would be someone who works for someone else – an employee. “In these verses the apostle shows that Christianity makes no change in our civil connections” (TSK). Just because someone is born again does not give them any more rights politically or economically than they had before they were converted.

Within the context of the day in which this letter was written, Albert Barnes said this:

“Slaves abounded in Greece and in every part of the pagan world. Athens, e. g., had, in her best days, 20,000 freemen, and 400,000 slaves. See the condition of the pagan world on this subject illustrated at length, and in a very learned manner, by B. B. Edwards, in the Bib. Repository for October, 1835, pp. 411-436. It was a very important subject to inquire what ought to be done in such instances. Many slaves who had been converted might argue that the institution of slavery was contrary to the rights of man; that it destroyed their equality with other people; that it was cruel, and oppressive, and unjust in the highest degree; and that therefore they ought not to submit to it, but that they should burst their bonds, and assert their rights as freemen. In order to prevent restlessness, uneasiness, and insubordination; in order to preserve the peace of society, and to prevent religion from being regarded as disorganizing and disorderly, Paul here states the principle on which the slave was to act. And by referring to this case, which was the strongest which could occur, he designed doubtless to inculcate the duty of order,

and contentment in general in all the other relations in which people might be when they were converted."

5. "Care not for it" – "do not be troubled at it, and uneasy with it; be not anxiously solicitous to be otherwise; bear the yoke patiently, go through thy servitude cheerfully, and serve thy master faithfully; do not look upon it as any objection to thy calling, any contradiction to thy Christian liberty, or as unworthy of, and a reproach upon thy profession of Christ..." (John Gill)
6. "But if thou mayest be made free, use it rather" – much has been written on this, and many great scholars have come to differing opinions, so it is challenging to be dogmatic on the interpretation. That said, considering the context, a good understanding can be had if we are honest with the text.
 - a) "If thou mayest be made free" – if freedom can be gained by either proper means (purchasing it or being offered it in return for something), or by improper means: "should a Christian servant have an opportunity of making his escape from his master, or could he by any art, trick, and fraudulent method, obtain his liberty..." (John Gill) – consider the situation with Onesimus and Philemon for illustration here.
 - b) "Use it rather"
 - (1) *"It" is supplied by the translators to make it more readable (not in the original Greek) but there is not indication what the "it" is referencing. It is either use your new-found freedom*

for the greater good of the cause of Christ or use your servitude (even if freedom is attainable) as a means to demonstrate the love of God to those you serve.

(2) I believe (as do many others) that both aspects are found in this phrase. If a slave could not gain his freedom lawfully, he was to stay within his position after conversion so that he does not become a bad testimony of Christianity (and for the church) and serve Christ while serving his master. If, on the other hand, he be offered his freedom lawfully, he is to use that freedom for the advancement of the cause of Christ. Again, reference Philemon and Onesimus (Philemon 1:15-16, 20-21).

(3) The context would indicate that Paul is saying to those in the church that had been saved while a slave to continue in that position without concern for changing it and use it "rather" as a position to demonstrate the spiritual freedom one has in Christ over the bondage of sin.

Galatians 5:1

¹ Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

(4) "Rather" – often translated "more" and as such it means in a greater degree. Here, as in other places when translated "rather" it is to be seen in that comparative sense – whatever our lot (free or servant) we are to use that position in a greater degree as a believer than we did as an unbeliever.

B. Serve God where you are – vs. 22-23

1. Whether a servant of man (as an employee) or one who controls others (as a manager or business owner), our responsibility as believers in Christ and followers thereof, we are to simply serve God, no matter our lot in life – “use it rather.”
2. “For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord’s freeman”
 - a) “For” (γάρ) – this is a comparative term, “properly assigning a *reason* (used in argument, explanation or intensification...)” – James Strong. This is one reason the phrase immediately preceding this word (“use it rather”) is more likely dealing with those staying within the confines of slavery as opposed to pursuing with vigor a release from it.
 - b) “He that is called in the Lord” – to salvation first, and then, as the context implies, to walking right with the Lord in the area of employment (or, civil responsibilities).
 - c) “Being a servant” – a slave
 - d) “Is the Lord’s freeman”

(1) “Freeman” – only time this Greek word is used in the New Testament – comes from two Greek words:

(a) ἀπό – away

(b) ἐλεύθερος – a citizen, not a slave (whether freeborn or manumitted) – Strong.

(2) “Is the Lord’s” – we belong to the Lord

and with that we are "liberated" from bondage to the old life and to sin, no matter what our position or lot in life.

e) "Likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant"

(1) "Likewise" – same argument as in first part of verse

(2) "He that is called" – to salvation and to walking right with God

(3) "Being free" – as opposed to being a slave when they were converted to Christ

(4) "Is Christ's servant" – we are bought with a price and now belong to the Lord. We are servants willingly, however, as opposed to forced labor or forced slavery, which was the case in the culture at the time.

"For the state of a servant to men no way prejudiceth a man as to his spiritual liberty; a servant and a free-man, considered with reference to Christ, are both one; a servant may be as near the kingdom of heaven as a free-man; and let a man be in never so good a state of civil liberty, yet, if he be a Christian, he is still a servant of Christ, and bound in all things to obey him. As to the new man, there is neither bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all." (Matthew Poole)

1 Corinthians 9:19

19 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.

Galatians 1:10

10 For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

1 Peter 2:16

16 As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

Ephesians 6:5-6

5 Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

3. Vs. 23 – “Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.”

a) “Ye are bought with a price” – Same as found in 1 Cor. 6:20 (see notes from that text), in relation to honoring the Lord with our bodies and in our marriage, we are to remember that we are bound to obey the Lord in all things because we are His – “Joined unto the Lord” (by choice).

Hebrews 10:10

10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Acts 20:28

28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

1 Peter 1:18-19

¹⁸ Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

¹⁹ But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

- b) "Be not ye the servants of men" – not saying to seek release from their bonds (as slaves), but rather to consider themselves as servants of Christ, no matter what their lot in life was. The same is true for us today. No matter where we are in life, we are to "serve the Lord" with all we have.

Colossians 3:17

¹⁷ And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Ecclesiastes 9:10

¹⁰ Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

C. Stand with God where you are – vs. 24

1. This may be more difficult today than in the past and may be the hardest part of our walk with the Lord. It's going to be easier, at times, to go along, or to stay quiet just to avoid the confrontation and drama.
2. "Brethren" – he says this to bring their attention to the fact that they are just that – not only are they born again by the Spirit of God, but they are to be united in one

spirit for the purpose of representing Christ (and His church in Corinth) to the world around them.

3. "Let every man" – everyone – without exception
4. "Wherein he is called" – to salvation and to walking right (take note how often this term is used in this passage – it is vitally important).
5. "Therein abide with God" – "They who thus abide with God, preserve a holy indifference with regard to outward things" (Joseph Benson).
 - a) "Abide" – to remain or dwell in the state of being a servant of the Lord, with little regard for position or lot in life other than to use it for the furtherance of the gospel.
 - b) "With God" – all we do is done "for" Him, "by" Him, "in" Him, and, as here, "with" Him – always there to guide us in the path He wants us to go.

Conclusion to this point: This is not saying, nor is found anywhere in Scripture, that we cannot better ourselves and our position in life, if the Lord leads that way. All this is saying, in the context of the letter to the church at Corinth, is that, no matter whether a servant or a freeman, we are to remain within the confines of our relationship with Christ and serve Him to the best of our ability, with all that we have – and all for His glory and not ours.

We, as individual believers, as well as the body of Christ (the church) to which we belong, are to "walk

right" in "everything" (broadly and particularly); we are to "walk right" as a church made up of individuals when it comes to our place of service within the body of Christ ("ecclesiastically"); and we are to "walk right" in the workplace. If we get this right, then we will be all that God intends for us to be – nothing more and nothing less. If we are then the work of Christ will have greater impact on the world around us.