

“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

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