

did not intend to put a noose around their necks and drag them captives to the cells of celibacy! But he did have specific goals in view.

- 1) Their moral beauty. "comely."
- 2) Their spiritual service. "may attend upon the Lord." This phrase literally means to "seat oneself beside the Lord."
- 3) Their practical singleness "without distraction." This is only used here in the NT and means without being dragged in different directions.

NOTE: Persons who are married tend to have certain preoccupations which the celibate does not possess. One must consider the "divided life" when he thinks of marriage.

4. The PARENTAL SUPERVISION vv. 36-38.

Admittedly, this is completely antagonistic to the "do-it-yourself" philosophy of the world, Christians live according to a standard which is not worldly! It is clearly stated that the father holds the veto power in marriage (v. 38). Whether he consents to marriage or doesn't is not a matter of sin; it remains a matter of quality of "goodness" (cf. vv. 1, 2).

- a. The conditions of it. vv. 36, 27. It was socially desirable for a daughter to be married. Failure to be so beyond the age of her acme (about 20) meant a reproach. Rather than allow a virgin to be involved in vice or peril of scandal, he is at liberty to allow marriage and sin is not involved.
- b. The conviction of it. v. 37. Where there is no desire for marriage on the part of the daughter, the father may maintain her in celibacy honourably. But then, he must be 1) determined (steadfast); 2) convinced (no necessity); 3) directed (power over his own will); 4) decided (do what he will).

Conclusion: What is applied to single persons is urged upon widows (vv. 39, 40). They are free to marry another Christian upon the death of their husbands (v. 39).

THE BOOK OF FIRST CORINTHIANS

"Christian Marriage"

1 Cor. 7:25-40

Introduction

1. Marriage is one of the big issues in life. It has always been that way since God ordained it in the days of Adam (Gen. 1:23, 24). The Corinthians needed information about it for their witness in the debauched society in which they lived.

2. Celibacy and marriage have already been discussed (vv. 1-9) as have the problems of mixed marriages (vv. 10-24). What should a single person really consider in thinking of marriage? This is the topic of this text.

3. Since the Word of God is timeless, it is well to understand that this portion is nonetheless applicable today as it was in Paul's day. No word of God must be relegated for a peculiar time period unless it is understood in relation to God's prophetic picture or dispensational arrangements. Here are abiding principles worthy of the consideration by all. Paul is not denying inspiration in saying "I give my judgment" (v. 25), for he admits the overruling ministry of the Spirit (v. 40). The issue is not inspiration, but whether Christ had given a word on the matter earlier.

4. Mark the essential factors Paul urges for careful perusal for those who consider the marriage arrangement for life:

1. The SOCIAL REVOLUTION. vv. 26-28.

- a. The fact of it. v. 26. "Distress" means narrowness, pinching distress, external circumstances." This must be considered! It is the milieu in which Christians find themselves. They are caught in the struggle. The celibate life is honourable in the midst of this distress. Not alone for "virgins," but for "anyone" as the generic word for "man" implies.
- b. The issue of it. v. 27. The revolution is of such a sort that whatever one's situation he should not seek to make a change. The two pre-

sent imperatives make it an urgent matter and something from which to desist!

- c. The end of it. v. 28. Some at Corinth insisted that marriage was sinful. Paul disposes of that view again as previously (cf. v. 2). "Sinned" is aorist and is from a root meaning to "miss the mark." But those who, in spite of Paul's words marry, will face new trials in the flesh. Times of persecution expose one to terrible alternatives between duty to God and affection for wife and family (cf. John and Betty Stam in China). From these dreadful and painful experiences Paul desired to "spare" them.

NOTE: The summation of this pericope is that Paul is certain that the issues of life are not to be ignored when considering marriage. It is a real life and the experiences of it are real. It commands careful consideration.

2. The CHRONOLOGICAL MOTION. vv. 29-31.

The apostle knows the gravity of the situation and the importance of his subject. This is all expressed in the unique verb "I say." But he comments in tenderness for he calls them "brethren."

- a. The brevity of it. v. 29. This is an item too soon forgotten. "Time" means "season or epoch" and this is fleeting. The word "short" comes from a root meaning "to contract, shorten sail, place together." It is only used twice in the N.T. (cf. Acts 5:6). It is a fervent call from God away from secular absorption.

- b. The activity of it. vv. 29-31. The particle "that" (v. 29) indicates purpose. It shows God's determination for Christians in various life situations. The issue is clear: one must be detached from mundane interests. Those which are mentioned include:

- 1) Marital. "wives."
- 2) Emotional. "weep; rejoice."
- 3) Commercial. "buy."
- 4) Material. "world."

The repeated phrase "as though" means "to have the feeling of those who do not have." These

issues are not to dominate one's thoughts. Indeed, Paul argues that one may use the world, but not use it to the full (abuse, is the intensive form of the verb "use"). It is a strong plea against the modern existentialist who cries that he lives as if he only had the present to live! The Christian knows there is more after this brief span! The "fashion" is really the guise, attitude and conduct of the current scene. The inevitable for all of this is transition (cf. 1 John 2:17). For one to be occupied with that which will pass away is unthinkable!

NOTE: When one considers the time factor, he is jolted into the realization that we live on the brink of eternity. This should affect our actions. If it doesn't, something is wrong!

3. The SPIRITUAL DISTRACTION. vv. 32-35.

"Anxiety" is the root of many mental and physical disturbances. How many lives lie at the bottom of warped psychological heaps! Paul wants believers to be "without care or anxiety." Christ had advanced this earlier (Matt. 6:25-34).

- a. The division of it. vv. 32-34. The word "difference" (v. 34) really means "divided" and is to be assigned to v. 33. It states in unmitigated terms that there is a wide gulf between the spiritual opportunities of the married and unmarried. The former are normally preoccupied with family needs while the latter is freer to think only in terms of the Lord's service. The unmarried are free to give full emphasis to matters of holiness in body and spirit. Their whole person, therefore, is more available to God. Paul does not argue against marriage (cf. v. 28), but he seeks to give a fair estimation of the facts.

- b. The intention of it. v. 35. Three times in this section Paul notes his concern (cf. vv. 28, 32). The word "profit" means he has no ulterior motive, but he seeks their real advantage. He