

Exegetical Notes – 1 Corinthians 7:25-40

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Introduction: There was correspondence between Paul and the Corinthian Church about which we have no record. Apparently, in a letter which we do not have, the Corinthians had written to Paul asking him to address certain concerns. In Chapter 7 of 1 Corinthian, Paul begins to answer the questions the Corinthian Elders had addressed to him as an Apostle. The second of these concerns marriage and divorce.

1 Corinthians 7:25-40

Verses 25-28

Now about virgins: I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. ²⁶ Because of the present crisis, I think that it is good for a man to remain as he is. ²⁷ Are you pledged to a woman? Do not seek to be released. Are you free from such a commitment? Do not look for a wife. ²⁸ But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this.

- Throughout this passage, Paul uses the word “virgins” to refer to young women who are not married. While the expectation is that young unmarried women would be sexually pure, the term is not used in reference to a woman’s sexual history.
- He speaks to young unmarried women without any direct reference to teaching on this subject from Jesus.
- Paul speaks in light of “this present crisis.” However, we do not know what specific crisis he meant. Perhaps he is referring to some persecution that Corinthian Christians were experiencing at that time.
- The advice he gives to unmarried and married people is best summed up in 1 Corinthians 7:17.
- He reminds people who choose to marry that marriage adds to life’s complications.

Verses 29-31

²⁹ What I mean, brothers and sisters, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they do not; ³⁰ those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; ³¹ those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.

- Paul believed that Jesus' return would be soon and that at the time of Jesus' return the present world order would end. Therefore, Christians should not be attached to the things of this present age.

Verses 32-35

³² I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord. ³³ But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife— ³⁴ and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband. ³⁵ I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.

- Paul explains how life is complicated by marriage. A Christian's desire should be to give God glory through absolute devotion to Him through Jesus. Marriage prevents this since a married person is obligated to care for his/her spouse and their children. A married person's loyalties are divided between God and devotion to his/her family.
- Paul is not against marriage. He is simply concerned that the demands of a marriage compete with a Christian's desire to put God above all else.

Verses 36-38

³⁶ If anyone is worried that he might not be acting honorably toward the virgin he is engaged to, and if his passions are too strong^[a] and he feels he ought to marry, he should do as he wants. He is not sinning. They should get married. ³⁷ But the man who has settled the matter in his own mind, who is under no compulsion but has control over his own will, and who has made up his mind not to marry the virgin—this man also does the right thing. ³⁸ So then, he who marries the virgin does right, but he who does not marry her does better.

- Marriage is not forbidden. But if a man or a woman is able to live without being married, being unmarried allows a person to be free to serve God more fully.

Verses 39-40

³⁹ A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord. ⁴⁰ In my judgment, she is happier if she stays as she is—and I think that I too have the Spirit of God.

- Marriage is until death. If one's spouse dies, one is free to remarry. However, a believer should not marry an unbeliever.
- Paul believes that it is better for a believer to remain unmarried so that he or she may better serve the Lord.

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