

## **Parson to Person**

### **1 Corinthians 7 (Part 4)**

#### **(Singleness, Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage—The Biblical Positions)**

*“But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches. Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters. Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it. For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord’s freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ’s slave. You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. Brethren, let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called” (1 Corinthians 7: 17–24).*

In Verses 17–24 we have at least three things we must consider.

#### **Singleness—Not for Everyone**

First of all, we must once again recognize that Paul was single, that he advocated for singleness, and yet recognized that singleness is a gift that God bestows on some—equipping them for the single life.

Jesus, when talking about divorce with the Pharisees and His disciples, said, “ ‘Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts,

*permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.’ His disciples said to Him, ‘If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry.’ But He said to them, ‘All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given: For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother’s womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it” (Matthew 19:8–12). Therefore, we must note that singleness is ok—as described in 1 Corinthians 7:1. However, we note then that singleness is a gift and calling not all can accept. For this reason, Paul said, “I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that. But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am; but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion” (vss. 7–9).*

### **Live—As You Are Called (Part 1)**

Secondly, Paul taught that coming to Christ does not require a change of marital, social, physical, or economic status. He said, “*let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called*” (vs. 24)—unless the condition is sinful or causes the believer to sin. For example, if one is a prostitute (some in Corinth were), there was need for change. However, Paul illustratively wrote, if one is “*called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised*” (vs. 18),

and, *“Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it”* (vs. 20–21a). However, he further added, *“if you can be made free, rather use it. For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord’s freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ’s slave”* (vs. 21b–22). Therefore, the married must continue in their commitment to marriage if or when coming to Christ.

### **OK, What About Circumcision?**

Thirdly, we are not called to a change of national/covenantal status. In Verse 19 Paul made an interesting and somewhat confusing statement. He wrote, *“Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.”* What, pray tell, was he saying?

- 1) Circumcision was the sign of the Old Covenant given by God to the Abrahamic family. It was required of every Jewish male and symbolized the Old Covenant and the believer’s desire to cut off the propensities of the sin nature—the flesh.
- 2) Circumcision was non-salvific (did not save or guarantee salvation) but demonstrated an allegiance to God and to the Covenant He made with Israel.
- 3) Circumcision was not required of the Gentile nations—as the Law and Old Covenant were specific to the Jews. However, if a Gentile wanted to demonstrate belief in God and join in the Jewish family of faith, the men were to be circumcised, ceremonially bathe, and offer sacrifices to the Lord.

4) In the now inaugurated New Covenant, the Jews are no longer required to observe circumcision. The New Covenant refers to a circumcision of the heart over and against the flesh.

In the Old Testament we read, *“Now it shall come to pass, when... you return to the LORD your God and obey His voice...that the LORD your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you. Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live”* (Deuteronomy 30:1–6 abridged), and, *“ ‘I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. Not for your sake do I do this,’ says the Lord GOD.”* (Ezekiel 36:24–32 abridged).

In the New Testament we read, *“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God”* (Romans 2:28–29).

Therefore, *“Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.”* Circumcision is no longer commanded—faith in Jesus is! (See 1 John 3:23.)

## **One Faith**

Gentiles do not become Jews when they are born again—and Jews do not become Gentiles. However, it is of note that the faith we presently enjoy is one and the same. Both Jews and Gentiles become one in Jesus and share the identical doctrinal standards, relationship with God, and future destiny. Gentiles are grafted into the *“root and fatness”* (Romans 11:17) of Israel—and share in their glory.

However, we must note that neither the Gentile nations, nor the Church, replace Israel. God has made an irrevocable covenant with Israel and will bring it to fruition. If someone is Jewish when they come to Jesus, they are not required to renounce their Jewish faith. They do move on from the Old Covenant and into the New by trusting Jesus, but nevertheless remain a Jew. The Jews to this date remain God’s covenant people! The Gentiles are *“grafted in”* to the *“root and fatness”* of Israel (see Romans 11) but nevertheless remain Gentiles. We are one in faith—one in Jesus, but distinct in identity. *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus”* (Galatians 3:26–28). This is the standard of *the* faith. However, even *“in Christ”* we remain male and female; we may remain slave

or free; and, there remains national, ethnic, and covenantal identity.

## **In Summary**

Paul called the Corinthians—and all of us—to live as we are called. As mentioned above, Christ does not require a change of marital, social, physical, or economic status. However, He does call Jews to trust in Jesus—and Gentiles to do the same. He calls the Jews away from the Old Covenant and into the New, and calls Gentiles away from paganism, the cults, humanism, atheism, etc., and to trust in Jesus.

## **Live—As You Are Called (Part 2)**

The price Jesus paid for us (to redeem us from self, sin, and death) was greater than we presently understand. However, we know enough to heed the call Paul spelled out before us: *“You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. Brethren, let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called”* (vss. 23–24).

We belong to the Lord. Therefore, Paul commanded, *“do not become slaves of men”* (vs. 23b). We are called to serve the Lord, represent the Lord, and glorify the Lord—not ourselves, not our pride, not our personal visions or agendas, not our fabricated religious standards, and in earnest may I say, not the wicked trends and standards of the world.

I love you all,  
Pastor Paul