

Parson to Person

1 Corinthians 7 (Part 5)

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

“Now concerning virgins: I have no commandment from the Lord; yet I give judgment as one whom the Lord in His mercy has made trustworthy. I suppose therefore that this is good because of the present distress—that it is good for a man to remain as he is: Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But even if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Nevertheless such will have trouble in the flesh, but I would spare you.

But this I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none, those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess, and those who use this world as not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away.

But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord. But he who is married cares about the things of the world—how he may please his wife. There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world—how she may please her husband. And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction.

But if any man thinks he is behaving improperly toward his virgin, if she is past the flower of youth, and thus it must be, let him do what he wishes. He does not sin; let them marry. Nevertheless he who stands steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but has power over his own will, and has so determined in his heart that he will keep his virgin, does well. So then he who gives her in marriage does well, but he who does not give her in marriage does better.

A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. But she is happier if she remains as she is, according to my judgment—and I think I also have the Spirit of God” (1 Corinthians 7:25–40).

Paul has relentlessly argued for the single life (vss. 1, 6–8, 27a, 28b, 32–35, 38b, and 40). He plainly declared that singleness provides freedom for the “heavenly things” over and against the things of this temporal world. However, as we have seen, he gave detailed instructions about singleness, marriage, divorce, remarriage, etc., and now moves into some thoughts on virginity regarding those never married and thus assumed to be sexually pure.

On Virgins—The Never Married?

The term “virgin” in Scripture should be understood as speaking of or to the unmarried—those having never been sexually active. Virginity was the Biblical, cultural norm for the unmarried at least in morally sound cultures. It should be considered the right way of single living. This was indeed Paul’s use of the word.

Paul did use the term “unmarried” GK: “*agamos*” (vs. 8, 32, and 34) with the potential of referencing the widowed or divorced. However, the term “virgin” GK: “*parthenos*” (vss. 25, 28, 34, and 36–37) must be understood in the Biblical context as never having been married or sexually active.

As expected, Paul continued to advocate for singleness but showed that marriage is good and acceptable. Therefore, he provided necessary instruction for married life for those who might choose to marry.

Priorities—Not Negligence!

Some have misunderstood Paul’s instruction to the married as advocating neglect of one’s spouse and family. This was not and is not Paul’s intention! His statement was one of perspective and prioritization. He wrote, *“brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none, those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess, and those who use this world as not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away... I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord. But he who is married cares about the things of the world—how he may please his wife. There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world—how she may please her husband. And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction”* (vss. 29–35). These

statements were about instruction regarding priorities—not permissions for neglect. The man or woman who neglects their marriage covenant will be miserable and suffer greatly—even diminishing or destroying their otherwise fruitful ministry.

The married do indeed “*care about the things of the world*” (vs. 33) as they should if marrying a spouse. The single “[*care*] about the things of the Lord” (vs. 32) if investing their liberties in ministry. Therefore, Paul’s instructions were critical for the negligent and essential when setting proper priority for those who might otherwise idolize or inappropriately allow spouse or family to inhibit their service in the Lord.

Of note, in our philosophical position on priorities, we set an order as follows: God, spouse, children, one’s ministry, and then employment. If our employment, ministry, family, or spouse come before the Lord, we must make adjustments. If our spouse and children (higher priorities) suffer as the result of our ministry or employment (lower priorities), we must make adjustments. If our employment negatively affects our ministry, adjustment is required. This is the Biblical pattern that Scripture supports—and Paul recognized this!

On Virgin Daughters

Biblical and cultural customs were in view regarding the father’s role in relationship to his children. Paul made this clear in verses 36–38. Children sought the approval of their fathers before being married. The father, as head of household, must give permissions before a child announces their intentions, engagements, wedding date, etc. Sadly, this appropriate custom

has for the most part vanished away in our culture. The same is true of virginity. I would call us to return to these proper standards and practice. Many in other parts of the world maintain these standards. Israel and many countries in the East still punish the disobedient and disrespectful. We might do well to heed the warnings they inadvertently send—and obey the Biblical standards.

Divorce in the West is far higher than in those countries who observe the customs of arranged marriages, parental permissions, etc. It is heartbreaking that we have so removed ourselves from the ways of the Lord.

Widows—The Final Word

It has already been mentioned that Paul would prefer to see the widowed remain unmarried. However, he wrote, *“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”* (1 Corinthians 7:8–9). Therefore, we know that a widow or widower is free to remarry, yet *“only in the Lord”* (vs. 39).

As mentioned above, Paul’s desire regarding singleness is simple. Singleness provides freedom for occupational time and energy in the “heavenly things” over and against the things of this temporal world. It is certain that marriage is good—procreation is necessary and encouraged—but these things are all part of this present world and will not be a part of the “glorified” life. When we are in heaven, reigning with Christ during His Millennium Kingdom, or forever enjoying the New Heaven and New Earth, we will not be

married or procreating but will be as the angels who neither marry nor are given in marriage (see Matthew 22:29–30).

Enjoy the calling the Lord has provided you. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing. Know that He is God and that we are the “*sheep of His pasture*” (Psalm 100 abridged). We have much to celebrate today—and in the life to come.

I love you all,
Pastor Paul