

14. Principles regarding marriages – Part 2

September 9, 2018

The late Ruth Bell Graham, outspoken wife of the late evangelist Billy Graham was once asked if she had ever contemplated divorcing her husband. Her reply: "Divorce? No. Murder? Yes."

Last Sunday the apostle Paul taught us about the ideal marriage life that must be filled with unselfish ways of life for one another. And we also learned that there are only two biblical grounds for divorce for the followers of Christ: First, when there is sexual immorality; second, in the case when a believing spouse is deserted by an unbelieving spouse. And the apostle further explained that our Lord can be glorified in the marriage where an unbelieving spouse can see Christ through the godly life of one's believing spouse.

For the remainder of chapter 7, Paul teaches us about how unmarried believers should live with contentment, as well as a specified guideline for the future marriage, if the unmarried chooses to marry.

A. LIVE AS YOU ARE CALLED

1 Corinthians 7:17-24 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. 18 Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised. 19 Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters. 20 Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. 21 Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it. 22 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. 23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. 24 Brethren, let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called.

One smart mouth once said, "Marriage is like a fly on a screen door. The one inside of it wants to get out, the one outside wants to get in."

The majority of first century churches were scattered throughout in the Gentile, pagan kingdoms. Many new Christians suddenly found themselves in unique situations: slaves and masters became Christians in the same church; new Christians found themselves married to an unbelieving spouse. Besides those personal situations, the pagan god worshiping culture itself was stressful, dominated by the heavy persecuting hand of Rome. Finally, the Church lived with the expectation of Christ's Second Coming at any moment, far more than what we are expecting now. What were new Christians to do?

Instead of thinking that you can or will walk with the Lord when your situation changes, you need to walk with the Lord in the place where you are at right now. It needs to come from our hearts, not from outward status.

Some people have the foolish notion that the only way in which they can live for God is by becoming pastors, missionaries, or Bible teachers. How many would be excluded from any opportunity of spiritual usefulness if this were the case? Listen, it is not office – it is sincerity; it is not position – it is grace that will enable us to serve and

glorify God. The name of Jesus can be glorified by the taxicab driver as he blesses God and speaks to his passengers of the living hope in Christ he has. He will be more useful than the popular preacher who goes about peddling the Gospel for profit on TV. God is glorified when we serve Him in our proper vocations.

Whatever the situation we are in, we can still know that God is in charge and by honoring Him as our Master and Lord, He will guide us with His strong righteous right arm.

B. THE ADVANTAGE OF SINGLENESS

1 Corinthians 7:25-27 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. 26 I suppose therefore that this is good because of the present distress—that it is good for a man to remain as he is: 27 Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife.

The apostle Paul is now talking to virgins. That is not necessarily female who never had a sexual relationship with a man. In this context, it is about anyone who is not married, either male or female, young or old.

Paul is not any less inspired here, because he said, “*I give judgment.*” But because he is dealing with life situations that differ from person to person, he cannot, and will not, give a command. Yet, he will give the Holy Spirit inspired advice and principles.

This did not mean that nobody should get married; but those who do marry must be ready to accept the trials that will accompany it. Perhaps Paul was referring to husbands and wives being separated from each other because of economic distress or persecution. Also, because of this distress, a married man should also remain as he is.

What is the advantage of remaining single? We can easily imagine, how in a time of persecution or great crisis, how much more of a burden a wife or a family can be for someone committed to standing strong for the Lord.

Now I am going to speak to the young people in this room. Listen carefully, please. The worldly entertainment and your school peers mock you if you say that you are a virgin at your age. The popular girls and boys in the school are the ones who slept around. Don't need to feel the pressure. Let them know that they have a greater possibility to have sexually transmitted diseases that will harm them in their future than you. Also, let them know that you can be like them anytime, having promiscuous sex, but they cannot be a virgin again physically ever. You have something very special for Jesus and for your own respect and for your future spouse.

Some of you who had sex before and you are regretting it thinking, “Does this mean that I am doomed from God forever?” No, if you repent of your sins and if you keep yourself pure from this moment until you marry a godly person, you become a spiritual virgin for Jesus.

Paul is using the terms “bound” and “loosed” in v27. According to the original Greek, Paul is using the vocabulary of the Jewish scribes. When a Jew in those days did not know if and how God's law applied to their situation, they would ask a

scribe, and the scribe would declare them bound or loosed in regard to particular commands.

C. WARNING AGAINST HOLDING ONTO THE THINGS THAT WILL PASS AWAY

1 Corinthians 7:28-31 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. 29 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, 30 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, 31 and those who use this world as not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away.

One of the common mocking phrases that we Christians hear from the unbelievers is that Jesus Christ has not returned last 2000 years and it will be another 2000 years before He returns. Maybe. If He does return today, we'd be ready, but they will be left behind. Jesus told us all in the Gospel of Matthew:

Matthew 24:44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

First of all, with the current situation around the world, I won't be a bit surprised if the persecution against Christians started to intensify not only around the world, but also even in America in the future. If another radical Democrat person gets into the Oval Office of the Whitehouse after the 2020 Presidential election, it will be far worse than what the former president Obama did. So, vote according to what the Bible teaches, not according to your opinion.

Your family can slow you down and separate your concentration to the Lord. But it is your obligation and joy to take care of your own family.

In v29, Paul uses the word "short." The Greek word for "short" is "sustello," "contracted and rolled up, as sails used to be by the mariners, when the ship draws near to the harbor." In other words, whatever we have in this world, we should hold them loosely. Because we don't really own them, but God does.

D. WITH LESS DISTRACTION

1 Corinthians 7:32-35 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. 33 But he who is married cares about the things of the world—how he may please his wife. 34 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. 35 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.

Paul is not saying it is a bad thing to be married. He is saying when you are married you have to think of someone besides yourself. That doesn't mean you can't still please the Lord. But it does mean that now you have limitations in your life that you did not have before.

When you are single, you are mobile. In many ways, you are free. That is good. Use your mobility for God's glory. Use your extra time to serve and grow closer to Him.

E. PAUL'S ANSWER TO ANOTHER QUESTION

1 Corinthians 7:36-38 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. 37 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. 38 So then he who gives her in marriage does well, but he who does not give her in marriage does better.

Paul addressed here the fathers of the unmarried girls. In that day, it was the parents who arranged the marriages, the father in particular. But I haven't heard of anyone whose father arranged their marriage nowadays though.

Looking for your spouse now or in near future? Don't strife so much to look for that right person for yourself. Ask God to bring that person for you. Some people became so impatient with the Lord's time that they jumped into a marriage and only to regret it later. Our God will do it for you as He did in the Garden of Eden for Adam. Do you know that it was the only perfect marriage on the face of this earth? Do you know why? Because Adam didn't have to listen about Eve's last boyfriend and Eve didn't have to hear about Adam's mom's cooking.

If you've noticed, while Adam was sleeping and resting, God created the woman for him. If Adam tried to find Miss Perfect for himself with his own strength in the Garden, he might wind up with Miss Chimpanzee or Miss Anteater. But God walked Eve down the isle.

F. THE FIRM GUIDELINE OF CHOOSING YOUR SPOUSE

1 Corinthians 7:39-40 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. 40 But she is happier if she remains as she is, according to my judgment—and I think I also have the Spirit of God.

Here comes today's main point of the study in v40. If you are single, and you feel that you want to get married, the future spouse you are going to have must be a born-again Christian. It is not negotiable, it is not a recommendation from God, but a command.

If you do marry an unbeliever, you not only will face many disasters – guaranteed by the Word of God, but also your spiritual walk with God will go down the drain. You might tell me that you are spiritually strong enough to hold your own ground and bring your future bride to the Lord. If you are truly spiritually strong, you wouldn't even consider marrying an unbeliever, no matter how much of a stone cold fox she is. It is nothing more than a lousy excuse to get your fleshly desire met. As a matter of fact, don't even go out with any unbeliever. Absolutely no missionary dating or wedding.

2 Corinthians 6:14-16 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? 15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? 16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people."

The yoke we see here in the Scripture is a tool to put two oxen together to plow the field. How would you like to have a big ox with a little wimpy Chihuahua in the

same yoke? Do you think they get the job done? You must have equal strength animals in the same yoke to plow the field. To do God's work, we cannot have two different spiritual conditions in husband and wife relationship as you start a family.

I've heard some sorriest excuses regarding this kind of situation:

- 1) "Well, he goes to church."
- 2) "She believes in God."

So, if you are a single Christian, wait on the Lord for the person He is going to bring to you. Start praying for that person from today. Mom and dad, grandma and grandpa, please pray for the spouses of your children and grandchildren.

G. APPLICATIONS

- 1) **God is glorified when we serve Him in our proper vocations.**
- 2) **Absolutely no missionary dating or wedding**