

Sunday, September 11, 2016—I Corinthians 7:1-2: Avoiding Fornication

Introduction

- This morning we are going to begin our study of I Corinthians 7. In chapters 5 and 6 Paul has had a lot to say about fornication.
- I Corinthians 5—Paul dealt with the Corinthians regarding “fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles.”
 - Instead of mourning over the situation the Corinthians were “glorifying” in their toleration of it to the point that they had become “puffed up” over it.
 - Paul instructs them to “put away from among yourselves that wicked person” i.e., put the offender out of the assembly.
- I Corinthians 6—Paul deals with the Corinthians regarding the proper use of their bodies as the temple of God.
 - According to verse 13, a believer’s body was not created for fornication but for the Lord.
 - Verse 15 makes it clear that a believer’s body is a member of Christ and should not therefore be made the members of a harlot. Why? Because the person who joins themselves with a harlot is one flesh with that person, according to verse 16.
 - In verse 18, Paul instructs the Corinthians to “flee fornication” because he that commits it sins against his own body.
 - Verses 19 and 20 present the ultimate reason why fornication is conduct unbecoming of the believer, it doesn’t glorify God.
- This morning as we start chapter 7 Paul’s focus is going to shift from the improper use of sex among believers to its proper use. Thus far Paul has primarily been talking about sex outside of marriage, in chapter 7 he is going to begin talking about sex within the confines of marriage.
- Given the sensitive subject matter of chapter 7, I want to say the following at the outset.
 - I am going to teach the details of the passage regardless of how uncomfortable it makes me.
 - I am not setting myself up as the perfect husband nor am I setting up Becky and I as the standard of a perfect marriage. That being said, I can only speak out the experiences I have had as a husband.

- I am going to try and strike a balance between sharing things that have helped Becky and I, without sharing with you all the private details of our life together.
- I have discussed what is permissible and allowable to talk about with Becky in advance.
- I am going to endeavor to be real and frank about things without be graphic.

I Corinthians 7:1

- **Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: *It is good for a man not to touch a woman.***
- *Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me*—as we start chapter 7 it is important to realize that we are entering into a new section of the epistle. Up until this point, Paul has primarily been addressing “reports” that he had received regarding the Corinthians.
 - I Corinthians 1:11, 5:1
- I Corinthians 7:1—now Paul is going to begin addressing the questions that the Corinthians had written him about.
- In the part 2 of the introduction to I Corinthians, I shared with you J. Sidlow Baxter’s outline of the book.
 - REPROOF—CONCERNING SCHISMS (Chapters 1-6)
 - REPLIES—CONCERNING PROBLEMS (Chapters 7-16)
- Given the content of chapter 7, it is obvious that the Corinthians had written Paul with questions about marriage, sexual intimacy, divorce, and remarriage all of which are still relevant nearly 2,000 years later.
- *It is good for a man not to touch a woman*—after coming through chapters 5 and 6 one ought not be surprised to find the Corinthians asking Paul this question.
- Put any other way, Paul is saying that it is a good thing for a man not to touch a woman. Touch her how? Given the context, Paul is clearly talking about in a sexual way. Regarding this phrase Ernest R. Campbell writes the following in his commentary on I Corinthians:
 - “The Greek infinitive translated “touch”, as used with the negative in this verse (“not”), means that a man is not to come into contact with, to know carnally, nor to have intercourse with a woman. . . Keeping this statement in its proper context, Paul forbids male believers to have intercourse with any woman except their own wives.” (107)

- I Thessalonians 4:3-5—if one is going to “abstain from fornication” he will not be “touching” any women.
- I Corinthians 7:8-9—it is good for the unmarried, regardless of the circumstances to not “touch” each other. But if they can’t contain their fleshly appetite for sexual intimacy its better to marry than burn with lust. Once the flames of sexual passion are awoken within someone they are hard to put out.
- I Corinthians 7:1—please note that this verse is addressed specifically to the males. Men should not have the same view of woman that they have toward test driving cars. Don’t buy into the lies of the culture.
- There is also an inverse teaching contained within verse 1. Woman should not allow themselves to be touched. Ladies have more respect for yourself than to give yourself over to some man without the security of a marriage commitment.
- Premature sexual intimacy clouds your judgment and brings you under its power. Clouded judgment leads to bad decision making.

I Corinthians 7:2

- **Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.**
- Paul is very clear, how does one avoid fornication? By getting married. Sexual intimacy outside of the confines of a marriage is fornication and a sin against one’s own body.
- *let every man have his own wife*—this statement is in the present tense and imperative mood which means that Paul is commanding men in light of their exposure and propensity toward fornication to get married.
- *let every woman have her own husband*—the verb structure is exactly the same in Paul’s instruction to the woman. The same imperative verb is used to command vulnerable women to get married as the men.
 - Sexual desire is not just a male problem.
- Both men and woman are responsible to avoid fornication. They must both say NO! if their ability to do is compromised, Paul’s answer is to get married.
- Note the expressions “every man” and “every woman.” Paul places not limits here on who may or may not marry to avoid fornication. There is no suggestion that divorced man and woman should be deprived of the physical intimacy of marriage simply because they are divorced. It would be better for divorced believers to remarry and thereby avoid fornication.

- The bottom line here is that Paul leaves no room for fornication and views marriage as God's prescribed methodology of evading it.
- Genesis 2:24-25—God created humans as sexual beings.