

Sunday, November 27, 2016—I Corinthians 7:17-24: Abiding in One's Calling

Introduction

- Last week we finished our discussion of divorce and remarriage in I Corinthians 7:10-16.
- This morning we want to move on through the passage by considering verses 17-24.

I Corinthians 7:17

- **But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.**
- Verse 17 begins a new paragraph that runs through the end of verse 24. In verses 1 through 16, Paul has been addressing their questions about marriage, sexual intimacy within marriage, as well as divorce and remarriage. This abrupt shift in focus could possibly indicate that Paul was addressing their questions in the order they were received.
- The question that Paul addresses in verses 17-24 is essentially should believers seek after a radical change in their physical earthy circumstances after salvation.
- When the gospel found each of the saints in Corinth they were either in the state of being: 1) circumcised or uncircumcised (v. 18-20) or 2) servant or free (v. 21-23).
- Paul is ordaining and instructing that believers abide in whatever state they found themselves in when they first trusted Christ.
- Romans 12:3—when Christ “dealt” (same Greek word as “distributed” in I Cor. 7:17) to every man the measure of faith” he did not require a change in one’s earthly circumstances.

I Corinthians 7:18-20

- I Corinthians 7:18—if a person was called unto salvation after he had been circumcised, they should be satisfied with his their circumcises status. In contrast, if a person got saved while they were still uncircumcised, they should recognize that circumcision has no spiritual value during the dispensation of grace and therefore not get circumcised.
 - Galatians 5:6: 6:15
- Genesis 17:9-14—the fact that Paul is instructing the Corinthians as well as the Galatians that “neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth anything” indicates that a great dispensational change had already occurred during the Acts period.

- I Corinthians 7:19—the rite of circumcision has no spiritual value during the dispensation of grace. Paul literally calls both “nothing” i.e., it has no value with respect to one’s standing before God.
 - Ephesians 2:11-12—in “time past” God divided men in the earth based upon circumcision and uncircumcision.
 - Ephesians 2:13-18—now the “time past” division has been removed. There is no longer any advantage in being part of the circumcision. Today during the dispensation of grace God sees all men without distinction as He did in the first 11 chapters of Genesis.
- I Corinthians 7:19—Paul’s statements about circumcision in verse 19 coupled with Gal. 6:15 indicate that he is not commanding believers to keep the precepts of the Mosaic Law. If he were, circumcision would have been mandatory.
 - Romans 6:14—we know that believers today are not under the law but under grace.
- I Corinthians 14:37—the commandments that Paul is referring to are the ones given to him as the apostle to the gentiles.
 - I Timothy 6:14—Timothy is to keep Paul’s commandment until the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ at the end of the dispensation of grace.
- I Corinthians 7:20—it is perfectly okay for a man to abide in the state in which he was called be it circumcision or uncircumcision.
 - Galatians 2:1-3—believers are not under any compulsion to change their physical status. It no longer matters to God.

I Corinthians 7:21-23

- Given the fact that these verses address the issue of slavery they have been a source of controversy for some believers. As we begin our study of these verses let me just say that it would be a mistake to read American history back into these Pauline verses.
- I Corinthians 7:21—Paul is speaking about a person who was a slave when they were called unto salvation. Now that this person is saved, what should their position be toward their socio-economic position? Paul’s answer is “care not for it” i.e., don’t let it concern you, be a care to you, or occupy your thinking. Paul did not want belief of the gospel of the grace of God to incite social revolution.
 - Philemon—if a slaves calling to salvation become equated with a refusal to serve his master, the progress of the Gospel would have been severely hampered. If believing

slaves had revolted in mass it would have brought the wrath of the Roman empire upon the entire infant church.

- Colossians 3:23—this is why Paul instructs his converts to remain in their callings but with the right frame of mind, doing all things unto the Lord.
- I Corinthians 7:21—the adversative “but” informs us that Paul was interested in freedom for converted slaves so long as it could be obtained in a peaceful, non-violent, and non-deserting manner.
- The phrase “if thou mayest” is in the present tense and means that if at any time a believing slave was able, or had it within their power or ability to become a freeman, they should exercise that power. Paul is not pro-slavery he is pro-gospel.
- I Corinthians 7:22—the first part of this verse is referring to any individual slave who has trusted in the finished word of the Lord Jesus Christ. As one who has been joined to Christ, and redeemed from sin and its penalty, Paul calls such a slave the Lord’s freeman i.e., they are a freed-from-sin person who belongs to the Lord.
- “Likewise”—don’t miss the comparison. The one who trusts Christ out of a state of “being free” is the servant or slave of Christ. The man who was once a freeman in society is now owned and possessed by Christ, he belongs to Christ.
 - Ephesians 4:30—the Lord Jesus Christ has placed his mark of ownership upon you.
- How many times does Paul refer to himself as a slave to Christ?
 - Romans 1:1
 - Galatians 1:10
- I Corinthians 7:23—“ye are bought with a price”—is referring to all members of the body of Christ both free and slave. The salvation of every believer has been bought and paid for by the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - Ephesians 2:1-4
- Therefore, none us, whether bond nor free are to be the servants of men. All believes regardless of their physical circumstances are capable serving the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - Ephesians 6:5-8
 - Colossians 3:22-23

I Corinthians 7:24

- This verse ties up this section with a nice little bow. Every man regardless of his situation circumcised or uncircumcised, bond or free, is to abide with God in his calling.
- Our salvation brings God into whatever state we find ourselves.