

Sunday, January 15, 2017—I Corinthians 7:36-40: Scriptural Model for Choosing a Spouse

Introduction

- Last week in a study titled “Serving the Lord Without Distraction” we covered I Corinthians 7:29-35.
- In this section we observed some further thoughts regarding Paul’s comments on marriage, divorce, and remarriage in light of “the present distress” in verse 26 and the time being “short” in verse 29.
- This morning I would like to finish our study of chapter 7.

I Corinthians 7:36

- **But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of *her* age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry.**
- The first thing that we need to note about verse 36 is that it is the beginning of a new paragraph.
- Second, it begins with the contrast “but” thereby connecting it with the end of verse 35. The primary goal of Paul’s instructions in this passage in light of “the present distress” and the time being “short” is that believers might serve the Lord without distraction. Believers with spouses must by definition care for the things of this world in a way that unmarried saints do not (I Cor. 7:32-34).
- The contrast at the head of verse 36 indicates that Paul’s instructions in verses 32-35 were not a hard and fast rule that all believers must follow.
- *Uncomely*—according to Noah Webster’s *American Dictionary of the English Language* the English word “uncomely” carried the following meanings:
 - Not comely; wanting grace; as an *uncomely* person; *uncomely* dress; *uncomely* manners.
 - Unseemly; unbecoming; unsuitable.
- The Greek word translated “uncomely” occurs one other time in the Greek text supporting the King James Bible.
 - I Corinthians 13:5—“unseemly”
- I Corinthians 7:36—how would a man behave in an uncomely, unseemly, unbecoming, or unsuitable way towards a virgin? Given the entire context of chapter 7 the answer is clear; he

would not respect her station and engage in a sexual relationship with a woman to whom he was not married.

- I Corinthians 7:1-2; 9
- It would be easy to get bogged down in the middle part of verse 36. Basically, the essential point is this. A man that cannot behave in an appropriate way towards a virgin, regardless of her age has not sinned by taking said woman to be his wife.

I Corinthians 7:37

- **Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well.**
- *Nevertheless*—or notwithstanding what he just said in verse 36 a man that: 1) standeth stedfast in his heart, 2) has no necessity for physical intimacy, 3) has power over his own will, and 4) has decreed in his heart to keep his virgin pure and not behave in an “uncomely” way towards his virgin does well according to Paul.
- Verse 36—he that marries his virgin has not sinned.
- Verse 37—he that keeps his virgin doth well.

I Corinthians 7:38

- **So then he that giveth *her* in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth *her* not in marriage doeth better.**
- At this time in history, Paul did not view marriage as the first choice for the saints at Corinth. It was not a sin for them to marry. Ideally, Paul desired for the passionate man to have power and authority over his own will and remain single. On the other hand, Paul looked a marriage as the God ordained safety-net to maintain a believer’s purity and avoid fornication.

I Corinthians 7:39

- **The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.**
- Romans 7:1-2—Paul makes it clear that the Mosaic Law of time past taught that a wife was bound by law to her husband as long as he liveth. But if the husband was dead she is loosed from the law of her husband.

- I Corinthians 7:39—as members of the body of Christ who are not under the law but under grace Paul reiterates the same principle here in I Corinthians 7. A wife has been and continues to be bound to her husband as long as he lives.
- On the other hand, if her husband dies, or vice versa, she is loosed from the law of her husband and free to marry whomever she will. Not the subjunctive nature of the condition in verse 39. Whether the wife is at liberty from the law of her husband is completely up in the air and contingent upon future circumstances.
- A loosed woman possess liberty to marry whomever she will. There is however one limitation, she must marry a believer.

I Corinthians 7:40

- **But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.**
- While the woman in verse 39 possess liberty to get remarried “only in the Lord” Paul makes the statement in verse 40 that she will be happier if she abides after his judgement and remain unmarried.
- For those who might question the validity of Paul’s judgment in light of “the present distress” and the shortness of the “time” he concludes the chapter by saying, “and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.” In other words, Paul had the mind of God the Holy Spirit on the matter. Through the process of inspiration God the Holy Spirit gave Paul these words that we find in Chapter 7. Therefore, Paul is not just giving his own personal private subjective opinion on these matters. Rather he recorded the very mind of the Spirit of God for members of the body of Christ living during the dispensation of grace.
- I Timothy 4:1-3—Paul warns against those who would forbid marriage.

Scriptural Model for Choosing a Spouse

- I Corinthians 7:39—there are two things you need to take from this verse.
- You exercise your free will when you decide to get married. God has not by eternal decree before the foundation of the world determined in advance if you are going to get married and if so who you are going to marry. **IT IS YOUR DECISION. YOU NEED TO CHOSE WISELY!**
 - Knight in Indiana Jones the Last Crusade
- The will of God is clear: **YOU NEED TO MARRY A BELIEVER!**

- II Corinthians 6:14—this verse obviously fits with I Corinthians 7:39 in substantiating the notion that believers should not marry unbelievers. When Paul uttered these statements, things were a lot simpler in away. Essentially there were only three types of people: 1) pagan gentiles, 2) religious Jews, and 3) saved members of the body of Christ.
- In our day things are much more complicated. There are many claiming to be believers from across the theological spectrum. Many have often asked the question if II Cor. 6:14 applies to doctrine as well. Does being no being “unequally yoked” mean that a Grace Believer needs/must marry a Grace Believer?
- I Corinthians 7:28, 32—we already know that marriage by definition complicates life. It is always preferable to marry someone with whom you have commonality of beliefs because of the potential for conflict in this area. As the pastor of a Grace Church my council would be that someone ought to be seeking a spouse with whom they have spiritual and doctrinal agreement. If there are major doctrinal disagreements, you are setting yourselves up for failure. One major potential problem of a practical nature is what does one do with their kids.
- But Brother Ross there is no young Grace Believers in our church my age that I am interested in. What should I do?
- II Corinthians 5:20—go out as an ambassador for Christ and make some. In doing this one needs to guard their heart again forming emotional/romantic attachments before you know whether someone is a believer and in agreement with you about basic points of doctrine. Discerning whether someone is saved and what they believe ought to not be the last thing you think to discuss with someone.
 - Use myself as an example. Before meeting Becky, I allowed myself to get emotionally attacked to girls that I was not in doctrinal agreement with. If I had married them I would not be the pastor of this church today.
- I did not date Becky until after we had discussed and worked through our doctrinal differences and I was confident that we were on the same page.
- **IN ALMOST EVERY CASE I HAVE SEEN WHEN A GRACE BELIEVER CHOOSES TO MARRY A NON-GRACE BELIEVER THE GRACE BELIEVER DEPARTS THE FAITH IN FAVOR OF NON-GRACE TEACHING.**
- We need to value and esteem the same things that God values and esteems in our choosing of a spouse.
- I Samuel 16:7—the heart issues are much more important than the physical ones. What are you looking for? Are you waiting for Bible Barbie or King James Ken?

- I Peter 3:1-4—the inward adorning of a meek and quiet spirit is more important than the physical external appearance.
- I Timothy 2:9-10—guys pay attention to what your girlfriend values and esteems. How does she treat other people? Is she more concerned with external temporal things or the things of the Lord?
- I Timothy 5:8—ladies if your boyfriend is dead beat while you are dating him he is not going to change once you marry him. Pay attention to how he treats his mom. If he doesn't care about spiritual things now, he won't once you are married to him.
- *Make God's Priorities Your Priorities:*
 - I Samuel 16:17
 - I Peter 3:4
- *Guard Your Heart*—do not allow yourself to get emotionally attached before you know where a person stands spiritually/theologically.
- *Make Your Decision Based on Truth and Renewed Mind*
 - Romans 12:1-2—just because something is lawful or permissible does not make it the best decision you could make.
- I Corinthians 7:39—this is your decision. You need to choose wisely. There will be nobody to blame but yourself.