

Title: Undivided Devotion to the Lord

Passage: 1 Corinthians 7

Introduction

1 Corinthians

- written by Paul, one of 4.
- To a church in city of Corinth, which had a reputation filled with debauchery.

Context of Passage

1 Corinthians 1:2-9 (letter opens with grace)

To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 Corinthians 1:10 (shifts to truth)

I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.

1 Corinthians 4:14

I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children.

1 Corinthians 4:16

I urge you, then, be imitators of me.

1 Corinthians 5:2

And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.

1 Corinthians 5:6

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

1 Corinthians 5:11

But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

1 Corinthians 6:18-20

Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Truth: The world is not your friend!

EXPOSITION

1 Corinthians 7:1a

Now concerning the matters about which you wrote:

- What the Christians in Corinth asked Paul for wisdom.
- What was the first question they asked about? Sex.

1 Corinthians 7:1b

"It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman."

- Sexual purity

1 Corinthians 7:2

But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.

- Sex was made for heterosexual monogamous marriage. It is beautiful only in that context.

1 Corinthians 7:3-5

The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

- Husband and wife are obligated to one another's joy. It is a Biblical mandate.

1 Corinthians 7:6

Now as a concession, not a command, I say this.

- "this" = we are not obligated to get married or to stay single in Christ.

1 Corinthians 7:7-8

I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single, as I am.

- Marriage is God's gift.

Hebrews 13:4a

Let marriage be held in honor among all

- Singleness is equally God's gift

Marriage

- Marriage is wonderful but it is not the most wonderful.
- Testimony of Elizabeth Elliott
 - Her first husband was killed by an Ecuador. She later had a second husband who died and then a third. She spent 41 years of her life as a single.

1 Corinthians 12:11

All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

Old Testament: Messianic prophecy point to the singleness of Jesus.

Isaiah 53:8

By oppression and judgment he was taken away;
and as for his generation, who considered
that he was cut off out of the land of the living,
stricken for the transgression of my people?

Isaiah 53:10

Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

Isaiah 54:1

“Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her who is married,” says the LORD.

Isaiah 56:3-5

Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say, “The LORD will surely separate me from his people”; and let not the eunuch say, “Behold, I am a dry tree.” For thus says the LORD: “To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.

1 Corinthians 7:9

But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

Matthew 5:29-30

If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

- Marriage does not cure sexual sin. If you don't fight while single, you won't fight when married.
- Otherwise, you as undisciplined in singleness, you will be undisciplined in marriage.
- If miserable with your condition, be mindful you are being focused on yourself.

1 Corinthians 7:10-13

To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife. To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him.

- Though singleness is a gift, married people are not to be single again by choice through divorce; it is forbidden.
- Blessings of singleness are never an excuse for divorce.

1 Corinthians 7:14-16

For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace. For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

- Do not marry the lost. Do not flirt with the lost.

1 Corinthians 7:17

Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches.

- Live where God has you today.
- Man's dislike of God's sovereignty arises from his suspicion of God's heart.
- If there was a condition better than where you are, divine love would have put you there. (Charles Spurgeon)
 - Trials must and will befall -
 - But with humble faith to see
 - Love inscribed upon them all;
 - This is happiness to me."

1 Corinthians 7:18-19

Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God.

- Happiness is grounded in our relationship with God.
- Happiness comes from obedience, not a change in our circumstances.

1 Corinthians 7:20

Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called.

- Key commandment/truth

1 Corinthians 7:21-24

Were you a bondservant when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.) For he who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a bondservant of Christ. You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men. So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God.

- Freedom is only found in slavery to the perfect Master.
- Where is joy found? In Christ.

Philippians 3:8-14

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings [*even singleness*], becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:12-13

I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Church Family

- help singles to run after Jesus (not run after marriage).
- God promises we lack no good thing. Let us trust in His goodness.

1 Corinthians 7:25-26

Now concerning the betrothed, I have no command from the Lord, but I give my judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. I think that in view of the present distress it is good for a person to remain as he is.

- “present distress”? See v.29/31

1 Corinthians 7:29

This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none,

1 Corinthians 7:31

and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

- The Messiah King has arrived and has changed everything. He will come again, which we look forward.

2 Timothy 4:7-8

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

Hebrews 9:28

so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Matthew 6:25

“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”

Matthew 6:33

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Luke 12:32

“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

Romans 8:32

He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

Romans 8:28

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

1 Corinthians 7:28

But if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a betrothed woman marries, she has not sinned. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that.

- Singleness is God’s plan. So much so that being married is counseled here as not sin.
- Marriage is not the metric for Christian maturity.

1 Corinthians 7:29-31

This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

- Everything in this world are not ultimate realities.

1 Corinthians 7:32-34

I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband.

Questions for each - does this reflect your primary concern?

- Single man: *how to please the Lord*
- Married man: *how to please his wife*
- Single woman: *how to be holy in body and spirit*
- Married woman: *how to please her husband*

1 Corinthians 7:35

I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.

- Do we trust God? Do we believe Him?
- Do we trust God's Word as good - for your own benefit?
- How divided is your devotion to Christ?
 - If it is undivided, you will happily submit to God.
- God does not pity single people but loves them.

1 Corinthians 7:36-38

If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry—it is no sin. But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, and has determined this in his heart, to keep her as his betrothed, he will do well. So then he who marries his betrothed does well, and he who refrains from marriage will do even better.

1 Corinthians 7:39

A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.

- Word for widows.

1 Corinthians 7:40a

Yet in my judgment she is happier if she remains as she is.

- As singleness is God's gift, what should change?
 - To live single, is Christ.
 - To die, is gain.

1 Corinthians 7:40b

And I think that I too have the Spirit of God.

- This is God's Word (not mere advice)

CLOSING THOUGHTS

- What awaits for us all whatever situation we are in (married or single)?

Revelation 19:6-9

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,

“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.”