

1 Corinthians 7:8-16
Paul Teaches not to Divorce

Pastor Eric Douma
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Flow Of 1 Corinthians 7:8-40

1 Cor 7:7 For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that.

1 Cor 7:8-9 – Unmarried, but without “celibacy gift”

1 Cor 7:10-11 – No divorce for married believers

1 Cor 7:12-16 – No divorce for mixed marriages

1 Cor 7:17-24 – Stay as one was when called

1 Cor 7:25-40 – Concerning virgins

Paul Instructs Widowers And Widows

1 Cor 7:8-9 But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I. But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

Unmarried = ἀγαμος – Probably better rendered “widower.”

Implication:

Verses 1-16 deal with those previously married, or currently married.

Verses 25-38 deal with those who have never married.

Burn = πύρω more than likely refers to lust, not judgment.

Paul Instructs Married Believers
1 Cor 7:10-11 But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife.

Not I, but the Lord = Paul is recalling the words of Christ's teaching during His earthly ministry (Matthew 19:3-11)

Jesus Reestablishes Marriage
Matt 19:3 Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, "Is it lawful *for a man* to divorce his wife for any reason at all?"
Deuteronomy 24:1 When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes a certificate of divorce...
Shammai = Indecency was only sexual unfaithfulness
Hillel = Indecency could be as minor as a spoiled dish, a mole, or that some other woman was more attractive.

Jesus Explicates The 7th Commandment
Matt 19:4-9 And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created *them* from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, and said, 'FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'? "So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND *her* AWAY?" He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses **permitted** you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."

Jesus And Paul On "Gifts"
Matt 19:10-11 The disciples said to Him, "If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry." But He said to them, "Not all men *can* accept this statement, but *only* those to whom it has been given."

1 Cor 7:7 For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that.

Paul Instructs Christians In Mixed Marriages
1 Cor 7:12-14 But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her. And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.
1 Cor 7:25 Now concerning virgins I have no command of the Lord, but I give an opinion as one who by the mercy of the Lord is trustworthy.
Implication: No one can claim this is just Paul's opinion, and therefore not binding!

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Sanctified/holy = normally associated with salvation cannot mean that here: vs. 16 "...how do you know wife whether or not you will save your husband?..."

Probable Reconstruction

1 Cor 7:1 Now concerning the things about which you wrote, "it is good for a man not to touch a woman."

Corinthians were saying: "It is good to abstain from intercourse to be "more spiritual. Sexual relations with an unbeliever will defile the believer."

Paul corrected them by teaching: "No, the believer is defiled by the unbelieving spouse; rather, the unbeliever is exposed to the gospel and therefore salvation through the believer!"

Paul's Principle: "Stay As You Were Called"

1 Cor 7:15-16 Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace. For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?

Yet if = εἰ δέ... Indicates another exception clause.

- Not under bondage = If the unbeliever leaves, the believer is released from burden of maintaining the marriage, but this does not imply divorce or remarriage is acceptable! 1 Cor 7:39 A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. (Rom 7:2)
- Paul's principle: "Stay as you were called!"

1 Cor 7:15-16 Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace. For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?

But = adversative indicating the preferred method of God – (God keeping believer and unbeliever together in "peace.") (cf. Rom 12:18)

Personal Translation: Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under ~~bondage~~ in such cases. But God has called us to peace. (The ideal to be strived for – rather than the exception). For how do you know, O wife whether you will save your husband? Or how do know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?

Application

- Our situation is usually made more complex because our concerns are often the precise opposite of theirs, which caused this to be written in the first place. They wanted to dissolve marriages; we want to know whether remarriage is permitted. Two things, therefore, need to be pointed out. First, Paul does not speak to the question of remarriage. If that is one's concern, then it must be wrestled with in the much larger context of Scripture; and the answer is not clear-cut. In many cases such marriages are clearly redemptive. Even if it is not the ideal situation, God still redeems our fallenness, whether it be individuals or broken marriages. On the other hand, there is nothing redemptive in remarriage that is simply an excuse for legalized lust.
- Second, the real point of the passage needs to be given a fair hearing. When a married man or woman hears and responds to the call of the gospel but the married partner does not—at least at the same time—let the new believer consider the spouse sanctified, that is, also set apart for the gospel. And then let him or her so live that in due time they might “save” their spouses. That's the Good News that this passage sets before us (Fee).
