

TROUBLE IN MARRIAGE

TEXT: CORINTHIANS 7:12-17

INTRODUCTION:

1. Since the apostle Paul spoke about sexual immorality in chapters 5 and 6, the transition to the subject of marriage in chapter 7 is perfectly natural.
2. The Bible teaches that marriage was ordained by God, and in I Corinthians 7, the apostle Paul deals with the duties of the unmarried as well as the duties of the married.
3. And he deals with the question whether or not it is right and advisable that the unmarried should marry.
4. Furthermore, Paul stated that divorce was not permissible (7:10, 11; cf. Mark 10:2-12).
5. Now, Paul discusses a different question -- “But to the rest speak I, not the Lord...” (7:12). Paul deals with the question of whether a voluntary separation was advisable and proper when one mate was a Christian and the other was not.
6. “But to the rest speak I, not the Lord...” (7:12), does not mean that what Paul is about to say is not inspired. What Paul meant was that this particular truth was not mentioned by our Lord when He was here on earth.
7. For those who are currently married, Paul told them to remain married, and in verse 10 Paul said, “not I, but the Lord.” This means that what Paul told the Corinthians is a direct command from Jesus. This command comes from Jesus’ teaching in the gospels.
8. In verse 12, Paul addressed “mixed marriages” — those between a Christian and a non-Christian, and Paul told the believing spouse to remain with the unbeliever, with the comment that the command comes from him, not Jesus.

9. Paul was not offering his own opinion. What he said is that Jesus never addressed this issue directly during His earthly ministry.

10. Our Lord did speak often about marriage and divorce, but He never spoke about marital problems in a “mixed (saved and unsaved) marriage.”

11. In the Old Testament, Jews were instructed to put away their pagan wives, but those instructions are not for Christians today (cf. Ezra 10:1-3, 10-12; Nehemiah 13:23-31).

12. But we are now living in a new dispensation, and the Lord Jesus did not refer the problem of Christians being married to the unsaved.

13. Under the Old Testament law, the Jew was obligated to separate from his heathen mate, but under grace, a believer should do everything possible to lead his unsaved mate to Christ.

14. Today, a believer should do everything possible to keep the home together.

I. DIVISION IN THE HOME

II. DEPARTURE FROM THE HOME

I. DIVISION IN THE HOME

1. “That believeth not” (7:12) means that she is not a Christian; that she is a heathen.

2. “And she be pleased to dwell with him” (7:12) means that she is happy with the marriage. She approves of their living together even though they are “unequally yoked.”

3. “Let him not put her away” (7:12b). Though she is a heathen, and opposed to his religion, the marriage vow is sacred and is not to be broken, or dishonored.

4. Albert Barnes said, “Even, therefore, when there is a difference of

opinion on the vital subject of religion, the tie is not dissolved; but the only effect of religion should be, to make the converted husband or wife more tender, kind, affectionate, and faithful, than they were before; and all the more so, as their partners are without the hopes of the gospel, and as they may be won to love the Saviour (I Corinthians 7:16).”

5. Verse 13 is similar to verse 12. “Let her not leave him” (7:13b). In Paul’s day (and in most places today), the wife did not have the power to put away her husband, and expel him from his own home.

6. But she could think it was her duty to leave him. The apostle Paul tells her not to do this – “Let her not leave him” (7:13b).

7. The Christian wife should continue to love her husband, and seek his welfare, and try to win him to Christ (cf. I Peter 3:1-6).

8. The Christian wife should be a kind, affectionate, and faithful wife; and by her good testimony show her unsaved husband that God is real, and salvation is real, and the Bible is the Word of God.

9. The Christian wife should not leave her unsaved husband unless her life is in danger.

10. Barnes says, “She should even bear much, and bear it long; nor should she leave him unless her life is rendered miserable, or in danger; or unless he wholly neglects to make provision for her, and leaves her to suffering, to want, and to tears. In such a case, no precept of religion forbids her to return to her father's house, or to seek a place of safety and of comfort. But even then, it is not to be a separation on account of a difference of religious sentiment, but for brutal treatment. Even then the marriage tie is not dissolved, and neither party are at liberty to marry again.”

11. God wants to save the whole family. Paul and Silas told the Philippian jailer, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house” (Acts 16:31), and his whole house was saved (Acts 16:32-34).

12. First Corinthians 7:14 says “the unbelieving husband is sanctified

(set apart) by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband.”

13. And their children are “holy.”

14. The unsaved husband with a Christian wife has a great advantage over the unsaved husband with an unsaved wife. The unsaved husband with a Christian wife has a godly wife who prays for him.

15. There is a Christian influence in the home. The unsaved husband with a Christian wife has a wife who can explain the Bible to him, and read the Bible to their children, etc.

16. In that case, the marriage tie should not be broken. Jesus said, “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Mark 10:9).

17. This passage should be compared with II Corinthians 6:14—7:1. In that passage, Paul warns that marrying an unbeliever brings defilement.

18. But in I Corinthians 7:14, Paul is referring to a situation where a wife or husband got saved after getting married. Here there is not defilement, but a sanctifying influence.

19. John Phillips wrote, “God has invaded the home. The Holy Spirit has a firm foothold in the family” (Exploring 1 Corinthians).

II. DEPARTURE FROM THE HOME

1. There might be situations where the unsaved wife or husband would be so strongly opposed to Christianity that they would be no longer willing to live with a Christian (7:15).

2. When this happens, the Christian husband or wife is often unable to prevent the departure. But whatever the case, they are not to seek a separation themselves (7:15, 16).

3. The Christian husband or wife is to do all that can be done to keep the family together. “But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A

brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace” (7:15).

4. If they are determined to leave, they will leave. However, nothing is said here about divorce and remarriage (cf. 7:39). And there is always the possibility that the unbeliever could get saved (7:16).

5. Barnes said, “Many have supposed that this (“bondage”) means that they would be at liberty to marry again when the unbelieving wife or husband had gone away. But this is contrary to the strain of the argument of the apostle. The sense of the expression, ‘is not bound,’ etc. is that if they forcibly depart, the one that is left is not bound by the marriage tie to make provision for the one that departed.”

6. “God hath called us to peace” (7:15). If there cannot be peace in the home, then there should be a peaceful separation. The goal should be reconciliation, and the conversion of the lost husband or wife (7:16).

7. God leads each Christian differently. “Distributed” (7:17) means “divided” or “apportioned.” We see the same word in II Corinthians 10:13 – “according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you.”

8. Verse 17 teaches that each person should “walk” (live the Christian life) in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them. “Just as God has called them.”

9. “And so ordain (set in order) I in all churches” (7:17b).

CONCLUSION:

1. First Corinthians 7:16 says, “For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?”

2. A Christian wife with an unsaved husband can “save her husband,” and a Christian man with an unsaved wife can “save his wife.”

3. No one can save except the Lord himself, but what this means is that

the Christian husband or wife can be the means or instrument of salvation of a lost family member.