

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

1 CORINTHIANS LESSON 4 (Chapters 7-8)

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: a wife is not to depart from her husband” (1 Cor. 7:10). Welcome to our study of the Book of 1 Corinthians, which deals with problems among members of the body of Christ that affect the church as a whole. In chapters 7 and 8, the problems about which Paul is writing deal with the marriage relationship, as well as knowledge (about idolatry, meats sacrificed to idols, etc.) that has caused some to be puffed up when compared to others. We can tell from 1 Corinthians 7:1 that the Christians in Corinth had written to Paul about these problems. In that verse Paul wrote, “Concerning the things of which you wrote to me, it is good for a man not to touch a woman.” His point is that if a person can remain single, it is good to do so. That is the main idea that Paul is trying to get across.

The Christians had written Paul with some questions, and in this chapter Paul is going to answer those questions. In order for us to apply these teachings to our situation today, we must understand the context so that we can apply the question that was asked to the answer that Paul provided. What is contained in 1 Corinthians 7? The Corinthian Christians had asked Paul if it was better to stay single and celibate, or to marry. Paul said in verse 1 that if a person can refrain from getting married, then he or she needed to refrain. But it is not a command. Rather, it was advice he was offering in times of persecution of the church when many people hated the church and when Christians were living in constant fear for their lives. Paul is asking, “Why would you want to carry around the baggage of having a family?” It would be better for someone to remain single if that person could do such a thing. But, as verse 2 goes on to say, “Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.” Paul advised these people to honor God’s original rules about marriage if they chose to marry. Each wife should have her own husband, and each husband should have his own wife. We can learn from this that marriage was intended by God to be monogamous. That is to say, it is intended to be between one man and one woman for life. That was God’s original standard. In Genesis 2 we see that God created all the things in the world, and yet no helper was found that was suitable for Adam. So God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep, and from Adam’s rib He made Eve. When Adam saw her he said, “She is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman because she was taken from man.” The divine comment in Genesis 2:24 was that “a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

There are several important lessons that we can learn from 1 Corinthians 7:2 and from the original command in Genesis 1. Each man and each woman is to have one mate. That is the way God originally designed it to be. Romans 7:1-4 teaches that at the point of a mate’s death, marriage ends. But people are intended to have only one mate. God has never set up man to have more than one wife. Is it true that, throughout the millennia, people did that? Yes, some of the kings did that. But did you know that God commanded them

not to? In Deuteronomy 17:17 God said, "Neither shall he [the king] multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away." Having multiple wives is something that was not commanded by God. There have always been basic principles in place in God's Word about marriage. In the days in which we live, how people need to hear that marriage is for a man and a woman! You will never find in the Bible God's authorization for men-to-men or women-to-women marriages. Marriage is for one **man** and one **woman**. In fact, Scripture clearly condemns the homosexuality and lesbian acts that are so frequent in our world today. Regardless of what a court system or state decides that homosexuals can marry, God never intended for that to take place. And, He actually condemns it. Leviticus 18:22 and Leviticus 20:12-13 state that such acts were "abominations" in the sight of God, and were punishable by stoning. Someone might say, "Well, that was under the Old Law." Did you know that the New Testament says that homosexuality is a sin against God and nature? In Romans 1:26-29 we are told that homosexuality is immoral and ungodly, and that people who engage in such will receive the eternal punishment that is due to them if they do not change their ways.

Someone might ask, "Are you telling me, then, that if two men get married, they will be lost in Hell?" Listen to the words of 1 Corinthians 6:9-10.

"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God."

People who remain in sins such as fornication, idolatry, and homosexuality will not go to Heaven. Yes, the Bible clearly teaches that homosexuals will not go to Heaven. That is what God has said on this subject. How does that relate to marriage? We need to honor the holy state of marriage. It is intended to last for life, and is intended to be between one man and one woman. That is God's original decree, and is what Paul is referencing in verse 2.

Then in verse 5 Paul says, "Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control." A husband is not supposed to withhold from his wife, and a wife is not supposed to withhold from her husband. Sex is something that God created to be holy. Hebrews 13:4 says that the marriage bed is to be undefiled. Sex should never be used as a tool against a person's mate because if that happens, it definitely could lead to sexual immorality. The Christians in Corinth obviously had asked Paul about things like these.

Paul then moves to the heart of the matter as he deals with two Christians who were married, yet who do not seem as if they can make a success out of their marriage. What should they do? Paul said that they should not depart from one another or divorce, but should make their marriage work. Notice 1 Corinthians 7:10-11, where Paul says,

"Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife."

If a wife wants to depart, Paul says, "No, do not do that." If a husband wants to depart and divorce his wife, Paul says, "No, do not do that. Remain together." How we need to emphasize to young people, and engrain in our own minds, that when a person says, "I do," that means something, and is intended to help a marriage to last. Marriage is something that we are to make work. It is our one opportunity to find someone who can help us get to Heaven. Maybe your mate isn't perfect. But you know what? You probably aren't perfect either. None of us is. We need to have the attitude, "'til death do us part, we **will** make our marriage work." The Lord taught very clearly on the topic of marriage, divorce,

and remarriage that there is one, and only one, scriptural reason for a person to divorce his or her mate, and then only the innocent party has the right to remarry. In Matthew 19 Jesus seems to be talking to Jews who had come to trick Him. They had asked Him if it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason. Jesus told them that from the beginning it had not been so because God had created them male and female, and that what God had joined together, no man should put asunder. Jesus' point was that, no, it was not acceptable for a man to divorce his wife for any reason. Then they asked Jesus why Moses permitted a man to give his wife a certificate of divorce (Deut. 24). Jesus told them that Moses had permitted them to do that because "of the hardness of their hearts." But He also pointed out that from the beginning, such had not been God's ideal. In Matthew 19:9 Jesus then said, "Whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery." The exception clause shows us that if a person divorces his wife for fornication (sexual immorality), then the innocent party is free to remarry. But the Bible teaches that whoever marries the person who committed sexual immorality is committing adultery, thus putting those two people into an adulterous relationship. What is the one and only scriptural reason for a divorce? It is fornication (sexual immorality—illicit sexual acts outside the marriage bond in which God has authorized sexual activity). The person who is innocent is the one who must do the divorcing. It is not as if a person can wait for, say, 10 years, and the other party commits adultery (after a previous divorce), and the first party can then say, "Now I'm free!" Fornication had to be the reason for the divorce, and the innocent part had to be the one who divorced the guilty party. That is the clear teaching Matthew 19:9 and Mark 10.

The basic principle is, "Do not depart. Do not divorce." If one person does temporarily depart (1 Cor. 7:10-11), then the couple must reconcile. The basic principle is that God has ordained marriage to be holy. If people divorce for an unscriptural reason, they cannot go out and marry other people. People who divorce for reasons other than fornication do not have the right to remarry. God has not authorized that. And if they do remarry, they will be entering into an adulterous relationship. The choice is to remain single or to be reconciled to one another.

In 1 Corinthians 7 Paul also deals with some other questions, one of which deals with a Christian/non-Christian marriage. Suppose a faithful member of the Lord's church is married to a non-Christian. Perhaps they both started out as non-Christians, but one of the people in the marriage obeyed the Gospel and became a Christian, while the other one did not. What if trouble had arisen in the marriage because one of the partners no longer wanted to live that life any longer? What should they do? Look at 1 Corinthians 7:12-13 where Paul said,

"But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him."

When Paul says, "I, not the Lord," it simply means that he had not actually heard the Lord say what he was about to say. But that does not make it any less inspired. How do we know that? In 1 Corinthians 14:37 Paul said, "If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord." Paul knew what Jesus had said in Matthew 19:1-7. Paul had not heard Jesus comment on a Christian/non-Christian relationship, but because Paul was inspired, He was guided by the Holy Spirit to write what he did. Do not think that when Paul says, "I, not the Lord...", it is any less inspired. It is just as inspired as the rest of Scripture. And what was his point? His point was that if a person had a wife who was not a Christian, he should re-

main in the marriage and not divorce her. If a wife had a husband who was not a Christian, she would remain in the marriage and not divorce him. In 1 Corinthians 7:14 Paul even said that the marriage was considered sanctified because one of the mates was a Christian.

But what about 1 Corinthians 7:15, where some people claim that Paul was offering another reason for divorce other than what Jesus had given in Matthew 19:9? Paul said, "But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace." Is this another reason for divorce? Is Paul saying, "I want you to stay together, but if you can't work it out, then you are no longer under bondage to your marriage"? No, he is not. And here's why. The words "not under bondage" are not talking about being under bondage to the relationship. We know that these two people were married to one another. The Greek word *dulo* used here literally means "a slave." Those who claim that Paul was giving another reason for divorce have relegated the state of marriage to slavery. Do you believe that if you are married, you are merely a slave? Do you believe that your wife is a slave to you? Is **that** what God teaches about marriage? No, absolutely not! Are we to work together to help one another get to Heaven so that together we can be "heirs of righteousness"? Absolutely! But the marriage relationship is **never** likened to a slavery-type of relationship. The word *dulo* is used 133 times, and never refers to the marriage relationship. In fact, in the same context the Greek word for "bond" or "contract" is used to refer to the relationship. But in verses 27 and 39 Paul used a totally different word to define the marriage bond/relationship—a word that is not the word used in verse 15. Why did Paul use a different word in verse 15? Here's why. Marriages are bound by God's law until death or divorce severs them. The Scriptures clearly teach that. In Genesis 2 it was "til death do us part." What God has joined together, man must not separate. Romans 7:2-3 teaches us that death ends a marriage. And we learn clearly that the relationship of which Paul is speaking in 1 Corinthians 7:15 is a Christian's relationship to Jesus. Paul says that if a person is married, and that person's mate (who is not a Christian) departs, then the Christian is not under bondage. What does Paul mean by this? He is not talking about the marriage relationship because he has already used a different word twice. Here is what he is saying. If the non-believer decides to depart, then the Christian is no longer under bondage to such an extent that he should leave Christ in order to follow his mate. The Greek word is used to describe a person's relationship to Jesus. In Romans 6:17-18 Paul wrote,

"But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."

The Greek word *dulo* is used to describe our relationship to Christ. We are a bondservant or slave to Christ. But that word is never used to describe the marriage relationship. This means, then, that if a non-believer says to his marriage partner, "You have two choices. You can go with me and give up Christ, or I am going to leave you," then the Christian must say, "I'm under bondage to Christ, and I must remain faithful to Him so that I never give up on the Lord." Does that mean that the Christian whose mate has abandoned Him has the right to remarry? No, that it not what is under discussion here. The thing that Paul is discussing is our relationship to Jesus. We must not give up on Christ and follow a non-believer. We are bound to Christ, and must stay true to Him all the days of our lives. That is the principle being discussed here. Jesus gave only one reason for divorce: fornication.

Another question arises in 1 Corinthians 7:39, where Paul is asked about widows. What is the principle for widows? Paul says, "A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord."

God has set in order certain specific things so that marriage will be right. What does the phrase, “only in the Lord,” mean? Why must a widow remarry “only in the Lord”? That phrase is used to represent “in accordance with God’s teachings.” In Revelation 14:13 we are told, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.” Are we going to say that the phrase “in the Lord” in that verse refers to every Christian? No, because every Christian’s death is not blessed. Only those who have lived their lives in accordance with God’s teachings are blessed. I do not believe that the phrase “in the Lord” means “a faithful Christian.” I believe it means “one who has the right to be remarried.” If we are to be blessed in our death, and only those who die in the Lord are blessed, then only those who have died faithful to the Lord’s teachings are blessed. Now, let’s apply that to 1 Corinthians 7:39. If the phrase in Revelation 14:13 means “those who died faithful to the Lord’s will,” then the widow must remarry “only according to the Lord’s will.” That basic will is set forth in Genesis 2 and in Romans 7:1-4 (which teaches that she has the right to remarry if she was married to only one man who had died). Is her next proposed husband a scriptural candidate for marriage? Will he help her get to Heaven? Is he the kind of person with whom she can pray and study in the kingdom? That is the principle God has set forth here, and that He is enjoining upon Christians. If not, and if the widow married a non-Christian, do we understand what that means? We would have to tell her that in order to repent of that, she would have to divorce that person. So I do not think that is what Paul is teaching in this context.

What about 1 Corinthians 8:1? Paul here discusses knowledge that leads to arrogance, and especially knowledge that appeared to be causing certain people to be “puffed up.” Paul said, “Now concerning things offered to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.” This was a type of “conceited knowledge,” which said, “We know more than you, so we can go out and do this when you cannot.” Paul is not saying that knowledge is unimportant. Jesus said in John 8:32 that it was important because “you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Knowledge is essential to salvation, but a type of knowledge that builds someone up so that they can look down their noses at someone else is the type of knowledge that is being condemned here. Knowledge just for the sake of knowledge does indeed puff up a person. Knowledge without love is pride. Proverbs 16:18 teaches us that “pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” Knowledge with love is where edification is found, and is what Paul wants Christians to have. You may know that there is nothing wrong with eating meats that have been sacrificed to idols because you did not go to a place where idols are found to worship them. The meat that was offered to such idols has now been taken to a market so that it can be sold. It therefore has lost any connection to an idol. But if there is a weaker brother who does not understand what you understand, you cannot say, “Tough! I’m going to do it anyway!” Paul is teaching that Christians need to temper their knowledge with love, and not put pride in its place so that they can help others come to that understanding, too. It’s not just **what** you know, but it’s also **who** you know. We need to make sure that we are concerned about people coming to the Lord and living the way God wants them to live in this life.

In chapter 8 Paul also deals with a conscientious person whose conscience is weakened or defiled because of people who are eating meats that have been sacrificed to idols. What should be done in such an instance? Should a Christian be considerate of such a person? Or should a Christian simply eat such meat anyway? What do the Scriptures teach? Look at 1 Corinthians 8:7-9 where Paul said,

“However, there is not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse. But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak.”

If someone was really bothered because someone else ate meats that had been sacrificed to idols, then Paul told the person who was eating the meat to consider the weaker brother. Romans 14 and 15 teach us this principle over and over again. Paul said that if an action caused a brother to be lost, then we must not do such a thing. Food, in God's sight, is a matter of insignificance. Food is not inherently something that will cause us to go to Heaven or to Hell. All food is sanctified by the Word of God and by prayer (1 Tim. 2:4-5). But if our eating something can cause a person to be lost, then we must not eat it. Notice Romans 14:23 where Paul said, "He who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin." If someone does not know that eating a certain food is acceptable to God, and he is made to eat it anyway, then he is condemned because he did not run his action through the filter of "testing and proving all things by the Word of God." Thus, we must be considerate of those who may not have enough knowledge to understand that a food cannot cause someone to be lost. The principle is that we must not do something to cause a weaker brother to be lost when we know that such an action is an option. We might say to ourselves, "This is foolish because we know that what we are doing is not wrong. You, too, ought to know that it's not wrong. Therefore, we're going to do this anyway." But that is the wrong attitude. Look at 1 Corinthians 8:11 where Paul says, "Because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?" Christ died just as much for the other person as He did for us. Just because another person may be weaker in his faith, can we then say, "We'll do this, and you can just go to Hell if you don't like it"? No, that is not the attitude we ought to have. We ought to have the patience and the kindness to love and guide that person along. In fact, Paul is teaching us that if our attitude is wrong, and we do whatever we want to anyway, then we are not only sinning against that brother, but we also are sinning against Christ. In 1 Corinthians 8:12-13 Paul said,

"When you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble."

How serious is this? Paul said, "If you have the attitude that says, 'I know you don't like it, but I'm going to do it anyway, even if it causes you harm,'" then we have sinned against the weaker brother and against Christ. Should we want to cause a weaker brother to go to Hell over something that is an optional matter anyway? Paul said that such attitudes were foolish and inconsiderate, and represented a type of knowledge that puffs up and that caused people to think only of themselves instead of those who were weaker in the faith. We must be considerate of other people.

In 1 Corinthians 7 and 8 Paul answered some difficult questions that he had been asked by the Corinthian Christians. He answered the questions quite candidly by showing them what God had said in Genesis 2 about marriage. He told them how they needed to live their lives, and that there is nothing acceptable to God if it is not found in the Scriptures. That same principle transfers over into salvation for us today. Are you sure that you are in a right relationship with God? We've been talking today about the marriage relationship. But there is another relationship that is even more important than the marriage relationship—your relationship to God. Are you **sure** that you are saved? Are you **sure** that you have obeyed the Gospel, and that you are a child of God? If you cannot answer that question in the affirmative, then you need to listen very carefully. Listen so that you can make sure from the Scriptures about what God has said that you must do to be saved. You must realize that sin causes people to be lost, and that we have all committed sin in our lives. Romans 6:23 teaches us that "the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life." We have all sinned (Rom. 3:23). And because of that sin, we have been separated from God. However, Jesus came into the world to save sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). That being the case, Christ

has made a way of salvation. The Scriptures clearly teach that in order to be saved, a person first must hear the Word of God. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Then a person must believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus said, "If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins" (Jn. 8:24). Then a person must be willing to repent. In Acts 3:19 Peter said, "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." Once a person has changed his will and way, then he must confess the name of Jesus. Romans 10:10 says, "With the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Then a person must be baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins. Peter said in 1 Peter 3:21 that baptism "does now also save us." Jesus could not have been any clearer than He was when said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mk. 16:16). If you have never obeyed the Gospel, and if you therefore are not in a right relationship with God, why would you wait any longer? We love you, and we want you to go to Heaven. We are praying that you will obey the Gospel of Christ.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR 1 CORINTHIANS LESSON 4 (CHAPTERS 7-8)

1. In 1 Corinthians 7:1 there is a clue about the subject matter that Paul will discuss in the remainder of that chapter. What is that subject matter?
2. What did Paul mean when he said in 1 Corinthians 7:1 that it “is good for a man not to touch a woman”?
3. As far back as Genesis 2:24 God had something important to say about marriage. What was it?
4. According to the Lord’s commandment given through Moses in Deuteronomy 17:17, what did God **not** want the kings of Israel to do?
5. What sin is condemned in Leviticus 18:22 and Leviticus 20:12-13?
6. What sin is condemned in Romans 1:26-29?
7. What command did Paul give husbands and wives in 1 Corinthians 7:5?
8. What was the reason behind Paul’s command to husbands and wives in 1 Corinthians 7:5?
9. What two important points regarding the marriage relationship are contained in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11?
10. What question did the Jews of Jesus’ day ask Him in Matthew 19:3?
11. How did Jesus answer that particular question (give a Scripture reference to support your answer)?
12. In Matthew 19:9, what was the sole reason that Jesus gave as being acceptable before God for a divorce?
13. According to Jesus’ instructions in Matthew 19:9, who has a scriptural right to remarry after a divorce has occurred?
14. What did Paul mean in 1 Corinthians 7:12-13 when he said, “But to the rest I, **not the Lord**, say...”?
15. In 1 Corinthians 7:15, the words “not under bondage” are not speaking about the marriage relationship, but instead are speaking about some other relationship. What is that other relationship?
17. What general principle does Paul discuss in 1 Corinthians 8, and how does that principle apply to Christians today?
18. What did Paul mean when he asked in 1 Corinthians 8:11, “Because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?”