

PathLights

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path"
Psalm 119:104*

September 17, 2017

Remain as You Were Called

by Frank Himmel

One of our readers asked, "How does 1 Corinthians 7:20 apply to marriage?"

The verse in question reads, "Each man must remain in that condition in which he was called." Actually, Paul says that three times (vv. 17, 20, 24).

1 Corinthians 7 is a chapter about marriage, one in which Paul is answering some questions the Corinthians had written him (v. 1). It would be helpful for us to know exactly what their questions were and what ideas they had about marriage, but we do not. Based on Paul's answers, they evidently had concerns about the propriety of marriage and sexual relations within it.

The Principle

Paul opens the chapter by saying that being unmarried is a good thing, but it is not always best. Not everyone can live that way. He advised the unmarried to remain unmarried (v. 9), unless they lacked sufficient self-control (v. 10). He instructed the married to stay married (vv. 11-12). He then told those who were married to

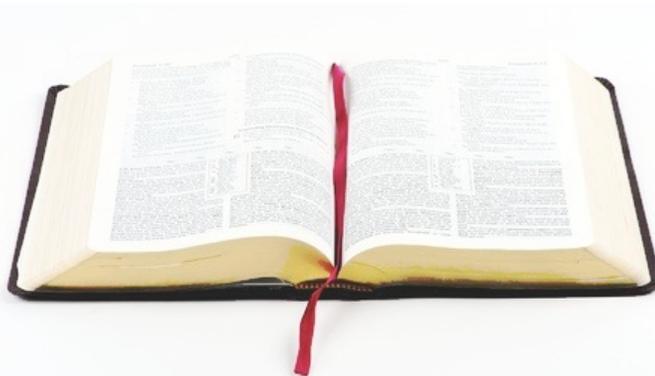
non-Christians that religious differences were no basis on which they should seek to end their marriages (vv. 12-16). In each circumstance Paul's answer was the same: becoming a Christian is no reason to change your marital status. Each should "remain in that condition in which he was called."

The Application

How far does this instruction go? Does it apply to every marriage, even to those who have divorced for a reason other than fornication and subsequently remarried, thereby violating Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9? Some say yes, others say no. Who is right?

Paul goes on to give two other illustrations of his principle: circumcision and slavery (vv. 17-21). God at one time required circumcision of His people, but no longer. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6). A man can be a Christian whether he is circumcised or uncircumcised because God neither requires it nor prohibits it. The

same thing is true of slavery. While the principles of Christianity certainly argue against slavery, there is nothing inherently sinful about being a slave. A man can be a Christian whether he is a slave or free. In fact, Paul notes that in Christ, ▶



in one sense we are all slaves and in another sense we are all free (v. 22).

Neither circumcision nor slavery nor marriage is inherently sinful. Thus, in either of these circumstances one should remain as he was called. (Paul’s point is not to prohibit any change in these circumstances, but simply that no change is necessary.) However, *to extend this statement to include conditions which God’s word says are sinful goes far beyond what the Apostle said!*

Surely no one thinks thieves or drunkards can remain in that condition in which they were called. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 unmistakably prohibits that. The same passage also includes adulterers—and that is what Jesus called those who divorce for reasons other than fornication and subsequently remarry (Matthew 19:9).

Could a polygamist remain in his condition, married to multiple wives? Could a homosexual couple remain married? (1 Corinthians 6:9-10 also addresses that sin.) Could a man and woman who are just cohabiting and have not even bothered with marriage remain in their condition? The same reasoning which would allow the adulterer to remain in his condition would allow these to remain in theirs.

Conclusion

Paul’s principle applies to things God neither requires nor prohibits. It seems some at Corinth were attempting to prohibit what God allows. That is a mistake. It is just as serious a mistake to allow what God prohibits. We must neither add to nor take from God’s word. ■

So Great a Salvation

by Frank Himmel

The author of Hebrews asked, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” (2:3).

Salvation is great because of its *source*. God saves us. Only He can do that. And he does so, not because of our merit, but because of His great grace.

Salvation is great because of its *price*. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son...” (John 3:16).

Salvation is great because of its *depth*. In Christ, God forgives every sin I have ever committed: every wrong thought, every wrong word, every wrong action, every neglected opportunity, etc.

Salvation is great because of its *breadth*. Divine mercy is available to everyone, no matter who you are. God “desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4).

Salvation is great because of its *outcome*. Instead of eternal death, the separation from God that sin creates, we may enjoy eternal life, intimate fellowship with Him.

Surely such a great salvation demands our full attention! ■



Service Leaders for the Week			
	Sunday Morning	Sunday Evening	Wednesday Evening
GREETER	Mark Clifton	David Gray	Adam Gibson
SONG LEADER	Carlos Garcia	Bruce Williams	John Baucom
OPENING PRAYER	Mark Clifton	Gary Hagler	
LORD’S SUPPER			
BREAD	Steven Turner	Steven Turner	
CUP	Josh Baucom	Josh Baucom	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	David Gray		
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Frank Himmel	Greg Winget
CLOSING PRAYER	Justin Candella	Brian Wilson	Ian Brown