

1 Corinthians 7:25-40

This section is a response to a single issue.

The issue involves women who are betrothed (engaged in the ancient world)

Verse 38 begins Paul's conclusion with "So then. . ."

It appears an ascetic view of marriage had infiltrated some of the believers in Corinth.

It may be that some of the Corinthians taught that it was sinful for a single believing male or women to get married. In verses 28 and 36 Paul says:

- ". . . if a virgin marries **she has not sinned.**"
- "if. . .he feels he ought to marry, he should do as he wants. **He is not sinning.** They should get married."

Paul's problem with teaching this is the **conflict between his two views:**

1. Celibacy is better and an easier position to serve God from (7:7; 7:35)
2. Paul completely disagrees with the ascetic position of restraining oneself from marriage in order to be spiritual that the Corinthians apparently held. (7:36; 7:38)

In 7:17-24 Paul tells believers to stay where and as they are when they are called by God to believe (point of salvation). These verses (7:25-40) deal with those who are **caught in the middle** of an engagement (a betrothal which is a legal document that ends in a marriage).

1. Should these people stay "engaged" the rest of their lives?
2. Should these people return to their single lives?
3. Should these people go ahead and finish the betrothal period and get married?

Paul basically says, "What do you want to do?"

Paul says staying single is better (7:38 and other places in chapter 7) which puts him in agreement with the Corinthians actions.

What Paul disagrees with the Corinthians about is their reason for remaining single. Paul disagrees with the Corinthian's theology that says a person can be more spiritual if they live an ascetic life and remain single.

This section is **void of the imperatives** unless they are restating something from verses 7:1-24 as in 7:27.

This section instead is filled with words and phrases like this:

1. "I give a judgment" 7:25
2. "I think" 7:36
3. "I want to spare you" 7:28
4. "I would like" 7:32
5. "I am saying this for your own good" 7:35
6. "He should do as he wants" 7:36
7. "this man also does the right thing." 7:37

Three parts of this argument:

1. 7:25-28 – Paul states their slogan, agrees with it but then qualifies it to remove the ascetic side from celibacy.
2. 7:29-35 – Paul states two reasons why he feels celibacy (not asceticism) is an advantage. It is a statement of fact not a statement of right and wrong, or of a higher spiritual plain.
3. 7:36-38 – Paul leaves both options open to the Corinthian believer:
 - a. marry
 - b. remain single

4. Concluding comment to women: 7:39-40 – if husband dies you are free to marry but you will be in the same situation as a virgin single: do you marry or do you stay single? It is your choice but single is better.

7:25

Who are “virgins”? There are three basic views:

- 1) The “virgin” is a father’s daughter who he has the responsibility of letting her marry a young man or not marry a young man.
- 2) A modern view (1902) was some Corinthians had entered into a spiritual marriage where a man and woman lived together as a married couple but without sexual relations. This was something that existed in certain areas of the church between 100-400 AD. Some of the men were having second thoughts and want to consummate their marriages.
- 3) The “virgins” were young believers who had entered into an engagement to be married but were being pressured by the “more spiritual ones” (pneumatics) among the Corinthians not to commit such a “carnal act.”

Paul has no OT verses or direct teachings from Jesus so he shares his opinion under apostolic inspiration.

7:26

But, because of the Lord’s “mercies” (“grace” of Romans 12:3) Paul does have something to say to the issue (and his words are inspired)

“present crisis” is not eschatological because it is already a current crisis.

The word “**crisis**” means “necessity, compulsion of any kind, distress, and calamity.” It refers to the current state of things in Corinth and possibly to the state of things for the entire period of church age history.

7:29 – 31 – Your Worldview Has Changed from a Pagan Corinthian, To a Believer!

Now that you are a believer the time is short! We now see the end goal. We understand the race.

- This statement is focused on the meaning of Christian existence in this present age and not simply a statement about marriage.
- Paul is not telling the Corinthians to neglect life in this age.
- Paul is not saying Jesus will come back very soon
- Paul is saying to prioritize the relationships and the possessions of this age in light of eternity.
- Paul is telling them in this letter to be responsible with marriage, relationships, food, and other activities of daily life.

7:36

Paul is not disapproving marriage see 1 Timothy 4:1-4; Eph. 5:22-33 and here in 1 Cor. 7:28 and 7:38.

7:37-38

There can be choices between good and better. Even good, better and best – See Rom. 12:1-2. That does not mean a good choice instead of the better choice is a sinful choice. Here is introduced the concept of moral levels. There are levels of morality, not just simply right and wrong....and, sometimes, these levels of morality need to be adjusted from person to person and situation to situation. This is NOT moral relativity, but wisdom and the application of truth and knowledge. Proverbs deals with this. Not to recognize this makes a person simple or foolish.