

**I CORINTHIANS**  
**Chapter 7:1-9**  
**Senior's Lesson**

**INTRODUCTION:**

With this chapter Paul begins to deal with the subject they had written to him about in a letter. **"Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me."** Although this letter has been lost, its contents can be known through the answers given by Paul. So through the remainder of the book we shall be studying the things that the church of Corinth had written him about.

Marriage was instituted of God and has its rightful place to those who desire it. Not all the people in the world would be happy in marriage. Many people are not happy in marriage because they do not understand the obligation that belongs in marriage.

Marriage has been a very important factor in the happiness of the human race down through man's history. This **7th chapter** is a good study of the subject from a Christian's standpoint. We must remember that the people of Corinth had written a letter to Paul asking questions about marriage.

There are many things to consider as we look at the answers the apostle gave to them. Corinth was a mixture of Romans, Jews, Greeks, and many other kinds of people. So as every nation has its own laws to regulate marriage they had many extremes on the subject in the church at Corinth. They seem to be interested especially in the Corinthian way of marriage.

**VERSE 1:**

It is evident that there were many different opinions on the subject of marriage among the Corinthian Christians. Probably, some of them of Jewish origin thought it necessary, while others thought it undesirable, if not wrong. Paul says - **"It is good for a man not to marry"**. The word - **"good"** means expedient, profitable, as it does many other places in the Bible - **Matthew 17:4; 18:8,9; I Corinthians 9:15**. We are able to see that Paul does not mean to teach either that marriage is morally an evil as compared with celibacy (def: the state of being unmarried, complete sexual abstinence), or that as a general rule that it is inexpedient.

Let's notice some reasons this can not be what Paul is teaching:

- (1) In the following verse he declares directly the reverse.
- (2) In **V:26** he expressly states that - **"the present distress,"** or the peculiar circumstances of trial and difficulty in which the Christians of that day were placed, was the ground of his advice on this subject.
- (3) In **I Timothy 4:3**, he specifies - **"forbidding to marry"** as one of the signs of the great apostasy which he predicted was to occur.
- (4) Marriage is a divine institution, having its foundation in the nature of man, and therefore must be a good thing. God therefore declared - **"It is not good for man to be alone,"** (i.e. to be unmarried, **Genesis 2:18**). Paul cannot be

understood to be teaching something that would directly contradict the Word of God.

- (5) Throughout the Scripture marriage is spoken of as honorable - **Hebrews 13:4**, and is used to illustrate the relation between Christ and His church - **Ephesians 5:25**.
- (6) All experience teaches that as a general rule, it is necessary to the full development of the character of the individual, and absolutely essential to the virtue and the well being of society. To down grade marriage would be going totally contrary to the Word of God. Therefore, if scripture is to be interpreted by scripture, we must understand the Apostle to say: "Considering your peculiar circumstances, it is expedient for you not to marry."

**NOTE:** Parents and grandparents – If there ever has been a time for you to teach your children and grandchildren on this subject it is today. Because of the awkwardness of this subject it is often ignored and even tolerated in the lives of children and grandchildren. Children today are not being taught biblical truths concerning this beautiful gift which has been given, by God, to a husband and wife. When parents and grandparents do not give biblical answers to this subject the devil and the world standards will. When "sluts" like Brittny Spears are the role model to many young people something is badly wrong with our youth's thinking. When our youth emulate this kind of "star" a wrong road is being traveled. Often times there are no standards of dress, dating, and friendships. Often parents and grandparents permit free access of a TV and computers with no safety nets or guards against the trash and porn that is so readily presented. The sad thing is these kinds of things are often times accepted and tolerated in homes. Yet it is these things that are putting our youth onto the road of promiscuousness which is happening in even many Christians homes today. Sexual misconduct is still sin today just as it was when Paul wrote this letter to the church at Corinth.

### **VERSE 2:**

However, marriage was commanded to avoid the sins of pre-marital and extramarital fornication. The believers at Corinth were surrounded by sinful temptations and excesses that constantly warred against the spiritual control of their sexual desires. In such a situation, a wholesome marital union was not only helpful, but absolutely necessary for many.

The command - **7:2**, shows that the fulfillment of sexual needs within the marriage relationship is right. As long as the world stands, marriage shall continue to be a personal matter to be decided by each individual. The proper form of sex, by a husband and his wife, has never and will never be a sin and it is a sad thing for anyone to be taught or look upon sex as filthy, or evil.

This has been the downfall of many a home, for when sex is used in the manner in which God intended it, it is the highest expression of intimacy in the marriage relationship. When it is wrongfully looked upon and used it is the worst thing that can happen to any home.

Note that only monogamy should be practiced - **".... his own wife, and her own husband"**. Also, notice that celibacy is to be the exception, not the rule.

**VERSE 3:**

The husband is to take the initiative in this area (his command is given first). Marriage without sex is not only unnatural but it is expressly forbidden. The word "**benevolence**" refers to the sexual rights. The command, "**render**", indicates that sexual intimacies should be a constant part of the martial union, not limited to the honeymoon or for the purpose of bearing children - **Proverbs 5:18-19; Ecclesiastes 9:9.**

**VERSE 4:**

At Corinth, the man was not to run to the temple of Aphrodite, which had sex as its religion. There were one thousand so called vestal (sacred) virgins there. In that temple you could get food, drink and sex. Those vestal virgins were nothing in the world but one thousand prostitutes. Sex was carried on in the name of religion. Love and sex are to take place at home. That is exactly what he is saying. The only motive for marriage is love -- not sex, but love.

Yes, in marriage the husband and wife belong to each other. The wife is not a piece of property to be used or exploited at will. She is not a sex object, existing only to satisfy her husband's whims. Rather, they are both persons who lovingly are to give themselves to each other. They are not to give or to withhold sexual privileges as the basis of reward or punishment. Each should be motivated not to have his own desires satisfied, but rather to fulfill the needs of the other.

It would seem that some in Corinth held the opinion that it was better for those who were married to separate and not to live together as husband and wife. Paul makes it very clear that such is not the case. It is permissible for husbands and wives to separate for short periods of prayer and fasting if they wish. Such times should not be prolonged however, lest any might through lack of self control be led into sin.

**VERSES 6-7:**

Paul was quick to point out that both the single life and the marital union are permitted and not commanded. The duties for each commitment are prescribed, but neither institution is obligatory. Marriage is a way, not a must. Nowhere does the Bible state, "Thou shalt marry," or "Thou shalt not marry."

Because Paul was single and had no compelling urge to be married, he was able to devote his entire life to the Christian ministry - **7:7**. This brought him spiritual fulfillment, and he desired this goal for every believer. However, he recognized that both the single life and the martial union were gifts from God. Men and women must act according to that desire divinely implanted within them, not in opposition to it. Christ also explained that concept - **Matthew 19:10-12.**

**VERSES 8-9:**

The words - "**I say therefore**" introduce a slight change in subject. Paul now applied the previous general principles to two specific groups; "**the unmarried and widows**". Since the latter term refers to women who had lost their husbands through death, the former

probably includes men who had lost their wives through death. Possibly, the term might include both widowers and men who had never been married.

Again, Paul viewed it as personally - **"good"**, not necessarily morally **"good"** if the two groups chose to remain unmarried. However, he knew that since they had formerly received the gift of marriage, they might not be able to control the desires for sex and companionship within them (**"if they cannot contain"**). In their case, it was - **"better"** (again, not commanded) to marry than to try to live socially with unfulfilled desires which could lead to emotional distress and spiritual defeat - **"to burn"**.

