



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

1 Corinthians 7:25-40

1 Corinthians

“On Staying Single”

TRANSCRIPT

Good morning. We are going through the book of 1 Corinthians, and as **Kent** mentioned, we so this consecutively, chapter by chapter, verse by verse and this week we’re in chapter 7. In fact, we’re concluding with chapter 7. We’re going to look at a rather lengthy section of the chapter, verses 25 through 40. So follow as I read. Paul is doing some marriage counseling in this chapter and he continues with that with verse 25. He’ll do really four basic issues, as I’ll explain in a moment.

But he writes, “Now concerning virgins I have no command of the Lord, but I give an opinion as one who by the mercy of the Lord is trustworthy. I think then that this is good in view of the present distress, that it is good for a man to remain as he is. Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But if you marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Yet such will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you. But this I say, brethren, the time has been shortened, so that from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none; and those who weep, as though they did not weep; and those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice; and those who buy, as though they did not possess; and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it; for the form of this world is passing away.

“But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and *his interests* are divided. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. This I say for your own benefit;

not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is appropriate and *to secure* undistracted devotion to the Lord.

“But if any man thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin *daughter*, if she is past her youth, and if it must be so, let him do what he wishes, he does not sin; let her marry. But he who stands firm in his heart, being under no constraint, but has authority over his own will, and has decided this in his own heart, to keep his own virgin *daughter*, he will do well. So then both he who gives his own virgin *daughter* in marriage does well, and he who does not give her in marriage will do better.

“A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. But in my opinion she is happier if she remains as she is; and I think that I also have the Spirit of God.” Meaning I have the Spirit of God in this decision that he is making.

May the Lord bless this reading of His Word. Let’s bow together in prayer.

Father, we give you praise and thanks for your goodness to us. You instruct us in the book of Hebrews not to forsake the gathering together of the gathering together of the saints as is the practice of some. It can become a course of action of some to take a casual attitude toward meeting together with the saints on a Sunday morning. We’re not to do that. It’s good to be here. It’s good for our own good. In fact, You require that of us because we need to have the fellowship of the saints. We need to be together in true fellowship, Christian fellowship is around Your Word. It has to do with the things of God. It has to do with Your revelation and what you have instructed us to do.

And so we come together this morning for that purpose and we come to a text of Scripture that is, on the face of it, difficult. It has things that we’ve just read that would probably puzzle us a bit as just, on a first reading, and so as we look at these things in some detail, Lord, we pray that You would give us clarity of thought, we’d understand these things, we’d put them in the proper context, and we would follow the principles that Paul sets forth that should guide us in the decisions we make in life, not only in regard to marriage, but in regard to all kinds of things. So Lord, teach us and instruct us, build us up in the faith. Give us an understanding of the things that we’ve read, that we would live a life that pleases you and a life that’s a good faithful witness to your grace before a world that needs to see that, needs to understand that. So bless us, Lord. Bless us spiritually. Build us up in the faith.

And of course, we have many material needs. There are lots of issues that face this congregation, health issues, employment issues. There’s just the difficulty of life. Life is hard and it can be a strain and it can put pressure on each and every one of us and we need your blessing. We need your enablement. We need you to give us strength and wisdom, guidance and protection. And we pray for those who are sick. Some are in great difficulty and we pray that you would give them encouragement and you’d give them healing. It’s not always your will, but your will is always perfect and it’s always right, and we need to come to understand that, and so bless those who are facing difficulties of that kind of in regard to their health or a lack of employment. We pray that You’d open doors of opportunity and that you’d give diligence in the search of employment and that you’d give wisdom. But, Lord, so often it’s simply you opening the door, and I pray that you give patience and diligence and that those who are in such situations would see your hand of providence in an amazing way. And those who are not in any particular difficulty – and that’s many of us – we thank You for that. And help us to be thankful. Help us to recognize that if we’re in a favorable position, if we’re in a pleasant place, it’s because of You. You’ve led us there. You’ve given us much and we should be thankful and we are. Father, it’s a long weekend. Some will be traveling. We pray that You would bless them. Give them safety and I pray for everyone here that You give them a restful and enjoyable Labor Day. And now, Father, we pray that You’d bless us as we turn to our text and as we turn to our next hymn, prepare our hearts for a time of study and worship. We pray these things in Christ’s name. Amen.

Many of you have heard the story of how John Calvin ended up in Geneva where he literally had an influence on the course of western civilization. I’ve told it before, I know. It’s interesting. I’m going to tell it again. He was passing through the city one night on his way to Strasbourg, where he’d planned to settle down and live the quiet life of a scholar. He was a young man, but he’d already made a name for himself. He’d published the first edition of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, and it had become well known. There was a man in Geneva at that time. He was the main minister of the city, and he was a fiery preacher named William Farel, and when he learned that young Calvin was in town, he found him and he invited him to stay and take up his ministry there. Calvin had other ideas. He resisted, but when he did, Farel took on the air of a prophet and he told

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Calvin that God would curse his life of study if he didn’t stay and minister in Geneva.

Calvin later wrote, “I was so terror struck that I gave up the journey.”

Now, I guess history would suggest that Farel was right and he spoke with some divine authority. But I think history also suggests that that kind of thing is very, very rare. It would be kind of nice if it weren’t. It would be kind of nice if we could go to someone like a Farel or a prophet who could tell us the right decision to make in any given time, but it’s not that way. We face lots of difficult decisions in life. We face decisions from where we should live and work to how we should invest our retirement money. And the reality is we have to make those decisions ourselves. And what makes it difficult is oftentimes, they’re not clear cut. They’re not always decisions between what is good and bad, but between what is good and what is better.

We see that in our text, in 1 Corinthians 7, where Paul is giving some marriage counseling, where he is giving advice on one of the most important decisions that a person will ever make. He’s been answering questions that the Corinthians asked in a letter they sent him. And in our passage, verses 25-40, he comes to the end of the subject. Here he considers four cases: virgins, if they should get married or not; married men, if they should stay married; fathers, if they should give their daughters in marriage or not; or whether, fourthly, widows should get remarried or stay single.

In all of this, Paul gives a couple of rules on marriage, rules that are binding. Christian marriage must be between believers and marriage is permanent. Now those two rules that he gives make this a very serious decision that one must deal with. Yet, Paul leaves that to the people. He leaves them with freedom in making these decisions. He tells them, in fact, it is a decision between them and the Lord. Only they can make it. And so they need to use their wisdom. They need to think carefully about what they’re doing. So he doesn’t dictate rules to them, but he does give some guidelines. He states his preference for staying single, if that is an option. Now it might seem from that that Paul was elevating the single life to a spiritually higher plain than marriage. He wasn’t doing that. He was being very practical.

At the time Paul wrote to these Corinthians, Corinth was in a crisis. We don’t know what it was, but he does speak of it as “the present distress.” So times were tough. That would present extra difficulties for those who were married. So his counsel was to remain single, at least during that time. He had two reasons for giving that recommendation. He wanted to protect the people from personal anxiety and he wanted to encourage the people to

personal service. But he tells them that the decision was theirs. It’s a very important passage on marriage, but also an important passage on decision making. That we are to consider the consequences of our decisions and we are to use great wisdom in making them.

Now Paul begins this last portion of the chapter by answering the Corinthians’ question about virgins, young ladies, and whether it was advisable for them to get married. It tells them that he had no instruction from the Lord on this, so he could only give them his opinion. But it’s not just the advice of a wise man, as he explains in verse 25, was a man who had been shown mercy by the Lord. He had been chosen by the Lord to be an apostle. So his judgment on this matter was, he said, trustworthy. This is still the counsel of an apostle. His judgment was that young people remain single in view of the “present distress.”

The church was experiencing a crisis of some kind, as I said. Some have suggested that it was the famine that occurred in the days of Claudius Caesar. It’s mentioned in Acts 11:28. It may have been something like that or it may have been something more specific. It may have been something like persecution. The Lord had warned His disciples in John 15 that they would experience persecution. It’s not unlikely that they were experiencing something like that and Paul may have sensed that these events, this “present distress” that they were in warned of something worse happening. Certainly came when Nero persecuted the church a few years later. He fed Christians to wild dogs and he burned them alive in his garden. Historian Philip Schaff called it, “a carnival of blood.”

Well, if that was the situation and Paul was sensing that something even more drastic was on the horizon, then you can see his concern. Conditions like that are trying for a single person. They’re difficult for one who is not married. But for a married couple, they could be overwhelming. The Lord spoke of the problems for women who were pregnant and nursing in Luke 21:23. A husband or father who would be faced with the choice of either denying the faith or suffering death would have the pressure of considering the effects that all that would have on his family, knowing that his dying for the faith would leave his wife helpless and his children orphans. Now that could make cowards of a lot of men. Well, Paul had been there. Paul had experienced persecution. He knew what it was like to go through such a challenging situation and he wanted to help his friends there in Corinth avoid such hardships. So he recommended staying single. He states it very clearly in verse 27. He says if you are bound – that is if you are married, “Do not seek to

be released. Are you released from a wife?” Yes? Then he says in answer, “Do not seek a wife.” In other words, under the present circumstances, marriage would be a burden.

That didn’t justify dissolving a marriage, but it should discourage or at least give pause to a single person who was considering marriage. Still, this was only Paul’s advice. He wasn’t giving a moral command. He wasn’t giving some binding command. The responsibility of the decision was not Paul’s to make. It was a responsibility a decision that the people must make, they must make for themselves. Those involved, the virgins and the unmarried men, must weigh the situation, the consequences and all, and make that decision themselves.

And if they chose to ignore Paul’s counsel and to get married, then Paul tells them in verse 28 that they weren’t sinning in doing that. They were free to marry. But he wanted them to be aware of the consequences if they did do that, that they would likely have, as he says, trouble in this life at that time. He was trying to spare them that. I don’t think we should understand this in a blanket way, a general way that if you get married you’re going to have trouble in your life. He’s speaking of a specific instance and in Paul’s opinion it was a choice between the good and the best, or as he puts it in verse 38, the well and the better. And so often those are the choices we face.

Well, when we have a legitimate opportunity to do something, we have to decide if it is the best thing for us to do, and that means that we have to be as objective about it as we can be. We have to weigh the consequences. That’s true of so many decisions that we make, from buying a house to making a move, or as in this case, to getting married. We ask ourselves, “Is it legal, for example? Is this something legitimate? Is this something that I can do?” And then, if it is, we have to ask ourselves, “Is it sensible? Is it the right thing to do at this time? Is this the right time to be doing it?” And that question, is it sensible or is this the proper time, is not always an easy question to answer, especially when it comes to marriage because so often emotions are involved in that and emotions cloud reason. When emotion takes over, it becomes a difficult thing and also become a very dangerous thing. And if two people fall in love, that is going to happen. Emotions are going to be a big part of the equation.

So as advice to young people, I think Paul would be speaking directly to young people here. He is. The council would be, “Be wise about your associations.” And that goes back early in life. Always be wise about your associations. I say speaking to young people because I think he is doing that here. He’s speaking to virgins. He’s speaking to

young ladies. But this applies to all of us. We need to be wise about our associations.

But particularly for someone who is at that age when marriage is a consideration. Not all Christians are good choices for partners, and not all good choices for partners in business and they’re not all good choices for mates in marriage. Simply because one is a Christian doesn’t mean that he or she is the right person. So wisdom is needed in forming relationships. So choose well the person or persons you spend your time with.

And that means spend time with people of character. When I say we need to form proper associations, that’s what I’m speaking of. I have a good friend who likes to say “character is everything.” And it is. And that becomes shockingly true after the emotional high of romance wears off. It always will. It doesn’t mean it can’t be rekindled and it should be, but there’s a reality to life that settles in after awhile and when the emotions are gone, the reality of a person’s character come to the front. So spend time with people of character.

Paul was simply looking at this question, this question of marriage, in relation to the outward circumstances. Was marriage advisable now in view of the present distress?

And he was advising on waiting. Marriage can be challenging in the best of times between the best of people in fine Christian marriages because even then, even in a Christian marriage, it’s two sinners that are joined together. We don’t reach perfection in this life. We will always struggle, as Paul puts it in Romans chapter 7, with the sin that’s in us, that principle of sin. It will be eradicated when we’re in the presence of our Lord, but not in this life. And so there’s always going to be difficulties. There’s always going to be a struggle between individuals. It’s two sinners living together and that is one of the reason we need to live together. As iron sharpens iron, so one man another, so two partners another. They sharpen each other. They are a means of sanctification. But it’s difficult even in the best of circumstances at times.

But in the worst of times, the pressure that is imposed can be crushing, and Paul wanted to spare them that trouble. It is wise to avoid trouble if we can do so. Again, Paul was not giving moral counsel. He was giving practical counsel, what is expedient or inexpedient now in the present. That’s the question that they must answer, that we must answer when we face situations. What is the most beneficial?

But Paul’s great concern here is Christian service. And he believed that the most effective service could be given as a single person. So in verses 29 through 31, he adds another consideration for the single life, a consideration that is really more general than what he has given, and that is the brevity of life, the crises of life, those things pass. But the

condition of life, the brevity of life never does. That’s the nature of it. In verse 29, he says that “time has been shortened.” And in verse 31, he reminds them that the “world is passing away.”

So considering that, considering the nature of life, he tells those who are married to live as though they were not; those who are sad to live as though they were happy; those who buy as though they already possessed. In other words, live in a detached way from the world. He wasn’t advising married couples to literally separate, obviously. He’s already told them that they’re not to seek to be released. Marriage is permanent. What he means is our residence in this world is not indefinite. It’s not open-ended. You’re alive today. You’re feeling fine today. You assume you’re going to be here tomorrow and the next day. You plan for next month. You plan for a year to come. You’re planning for your retirement. You’re wise to do that. We need to do that. But the reality is we may not be here next year. We may not be here tomorrow. Our residence in this world is not indefinite. It has been shortened, Paul says. God has designed that man has a brief time in this world. It may be 70 years. It may be if, due to strength, 80 years. But when it comes to the end, that’s the end. And that’s brief. We are, as James tells us, just a vapor in this world. And that’s the way God has designed it, as I say.

So believing couples, Christian couples must live as free as they can from the ordinary distractions of secular life. That’s what Paul is saying here. He was speaking to them like they were involved in military service. That’s the mentality, the perspective they were to have. They were to put the mission, the Christian mission in this life, first. We’re to live that way. We are to live that way in times of peace as well as times of distress. I suppose it was all the more urgent or it seemed that way during that present distress, but we’re always to live like that. We’re not here to enjoy life. There’s nothing wrong with that. In fact, if we don’t enjoy the good things that God has given us, we are in effect speaking against them. We are, as James tells us to enjoy the good things of life. They come down from God. They’re a gift from Him. And married couples should certainly have good and enjoyable marriages. Husbands should provide for their families and provide as abundantly as they can. But principally, we are not here to fit into the world and enjoy all that the world has to offer. Life is short and we’re to be living chiefly for heaven and the world to come.

We are to be living for the eternal, not the temporal. That’s what Paul is saying. And he lays some stress on that by explaining that the form of this world is passing away. Now



literally what that is is the schema of this world, the fashion of this world will be gone.

The things that so fascinate us, so capture our attention and occupy our time today will be gone tomorrow. In fact, Paul says it is presently going away. John says the same thing in 1 John 2:17. “The world is passing away.” I’m always impressed by that statement when I read it. Even now as we look at it, as we see the things that are so impressive to us, John says, they’re passing away right now. They’re in the process of going away, disappearing like a vapor, just vanishing. The things that we admire are disappearing. Now that’s nothing to invest our lives in, is it?

I like sports, especially football, and so we’re in the season. It’s just begun. I’m looking forward to it. Another year of disappointment. But I enjoy it. But there is nothing, at least to my mind, more ephemeral, more fleeting than a season or a championship. Even a championship lasts about a day or two, or maybe a week until we have the parade and it’s over. And then what do you do? You begin to think about next season. And that’s not just my thought. Some years ago I visited with a college baseball coach who was very frustrated with it all. He was looking for some guidance and he was a man who had coached on a team that was a very significant team. In fact, it had won the college world series. But he said that a few hours later, a few hours after they had won the championship, the euphoria was over and he was worrying about the next season.

Now that’s all of life. That’s the point of things here that he’s talking about. The point is the world, its form, its fashion is disappearing. Not only is it disappearing, but it will perish forever. So Paul was telling them not to get caught up in the schemes of the world, as though they’re setting down roots in this world, as though they’re settling into this world permanently. Don’t live for this world. Don’t live for recreation. Don’t even live for retirement. There’s a place for that. There is. We need to provide for ourselves, prepare for retirement. It’s going to come whether we like it or not. And there’s nothing wrong with enjoying retirement. But that’s not what they’re to live for. That’s not to be our main thing. We’re to keep all of this in life, all of the good things, all that the responsibilities that we have, we’re to keep all of it in perspective and live chiefly for eternity.

Not time. Because as Paul is saying here, it soon will be gone. Everything that we look at, everything we admire is going to be gone. Again, this is where decision making is implied. We are to be a people with priorities. We are to know what our priorities are. So we need to ask ourselves, “What are we living for? Are we living for what is good or

are we living for what is best? What are the consequences for our lives and the things that we live for and the decisions that we make?” Now, that will be an individual evaluation and an individual decision about how best to live for the Lord in the time that He has given us. We don’t have much time. We may not have tomorrow. How are we going to live today for the Lord? How are we best going to live for Him?

Well, for some, it will be best to live as a single person. Now that’s not always true.

Marriage is the norm. I think Paul has established that in this chapter. Not everyone can live as single. Not everyone has the gift to live single. Paul spoke of that earlier. He wasn’t in this chapter laying the groundwork for monasteries and nunneries, but he was saying that the single life gives advantages for service. He says that in the next verses, in verses 32 and 33. “But I want you to be free from concern, one who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord. How he may please the Lord; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife.” He has interests, as Paul says. In fact, he says his interests are divided.

A person with a family has responsibilities and they are accompanied by natural concerns, which are only intensified in a time of distress, like those Christians in Corinth were experiencing. And that naturally distracts a person from fully serving the Lord. It’s not wrong. Again, Paul is not making a moral judgment here. He’s simply stating the reality of things. Husbands and fathers are, as he puts it, “concerned about the things of the world.” That doesn’t mean they’re worldly, but that they have to provide for the needs that the family has in the world, and provide for it with the things of the world: food, clothing, shelter, guidance. And they should do that.

Marriage is good. And the man who does not provide properly for the marriage and the family is “worse than an unbeliever.” Paul wrote that in 1 Timothy 5:8. Marriage is an important ministry. Paul is not denying any of that. Marriage is an opportunity for great ministry. In fact, I would say it is the fundamental place – that and the church – for Christian ministry. A couple brings children into the world and they’re at their father’s knee or mother’s knee. They learn the Word of God. I was telling the early service that so often, in fact it may be the case in every case, that when I have baptized young people, children, I think in every case they were saved in their home, not through the preaching of the Word that they heard from this pulpit. That’s a great ministry. That’s a very important ministry, not only in leading a child to faith in Christ, but in the grace and the admonition of the Lord. It’s a fundamental important ministry. So we need to keep all of

this in broad perspective, but in terms of the missionary enterprise kind of thing that Paul did, leaving home, going to a distant place, all the opportunities and the time to do that are much more affordable to those who don’t have a family, who don’t have the restrictions that are placed upon a father in such a situation. So that’s what he’s saying here. In that context, a person is given much more freedom to minister.

Paul makes the same point in verse 34 about married and unmarried women. He refers here to virgins and probably to widows. He says of them, he says she “is concerned about the things of the Lord,.” He says she can do that so “that she may be holy both in body and spirit.” Now when he says “holy in body and spirit,” he means set apart. He’s not speaking in terms of morality. He’s speaking of that most basic idea of holiness, and that is to be devoted to the ministry fully. She can give herself completely to that, body and spirit. Everything is given to the ministry. So he’s not suggesting here that a virgin is more righteous, more holy than a married woman, as though marriage is spiritually second class. It’s not. It all depends on a person’s gift.

And Paul explains that in verse 35. “This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is appropriate and *to secure* undistracted devotion to the Lord.” Paul’s principle concern is devotion to the Lord, how one might best serve Him. A person in a single state has more freedom to do that, that is go out on the missionary enterprise, than the person who is married. Marriage doesn’t prevent devotion, but it does present some hindrances to ministry. Still, they only could make that decision. They are the ones that must decide what is best for them, what is proper for them.

So Paul tells them that he doesn’t want to restrain them. Literally, that has the idea of he doesn’t want to put a bridle on them, like one would put a bridle on a horse to forcibly direct that animal. He’s not forcibly seeking to direct them in their decisions. That’s not the way decisions are made in the Christian life. We’re not under the law. Paul makes that very clear in Romans 7 and Galatians 3 and 4. We are not without law. There are strict and binding rules in the Christian life. But much of what governs our behavior are principles that can be applied differently for different people in different circumstances, and marriage is such a case. It is good to marry. It is also good to be single. And Paul would not impose some legalistic rule on them either way. These were decisions for them to make. They have to look at their own condition. They have to look at the gift that God’s given them. They have to look at their circumstances and in light of all of that, seek wisdom from the Lord and make a decision individually.

Paul saw great advantage in being single. He has stated that. But to make it clear that marriage is not bad, he approves of it in the counsel that he gives to fathers in verses 36 through 38. For some reason, maybe because they were living in a time of distress, living in a special crisis, some fathers had kept their daughters from marriage. And maybe it was for spiritual reasons, for good reasons. We don’t know. That’s one of the difficulties in interpreting this chapter and really different parts of the book of 1 Corinthians. There’s much that’s assumed on the part of the apostle. He’s writing to them about circumstances that they understand and he understand. He doesn’t need to explain them to them. They are in the midst of it. So there’s a lot that’s assumed and we don’t know exactly what it is. So we don’t know the exact situation here, but for good reasons these fathers were not giving their daughters in marriage. But Paul tells them that if anyone should think, any of these fathers should “think that he has acted unbecomingly toward his virgin *daughter*, and if it must be so, - ” that is, if the daughter desires marriage, if she needs to be married, then he says, “ - let her marry.” It’s not a sin. What Paul was urging was that these concerned parents make their decisions according to a wise consideration of the circumstances. Weigh the circumstances. Understand your daughter and what she needs, and decide in that way.

On the other hand, he says in verse 37 if a father is not convinced marriage is in his daughter’s best interest and there is “no constraint,” meaning it’s not necessary for her to marry. She’s not desiring marriage. Then staying single is permitted. And it may be here that the issue is don’t force her to get married if she’s not ready for that and that’s not her desire. It seemed to be the normal desire of a father that his daughter marry. But he’s saying in some cases it’s best not. And don’t try to force the issue. As he says in verse 38, it’s a choice between the well and the better, between what is good and what is best. He then concludes his counsel on marriage with advice for widows. Tells them in verse 39 that it is all right for them to marry. His one restriction is that they should marry a fellow Christian. Now that is not strictly what the expression “in the Lord” means. It seems to mean, or this is the suggestion of a number of very good commentators, that this is an expression that means something like “as is proper for one who is in the Lord.” So what he’s saying is marry properly. Marry according to God’s will, which would certainly include marrying in the faith, not marrying an unbeliever. That is never permitted. Now that’s very clear from other texts of Scripture. That’s clear from 2 Corinthians 6:14, where we’re not to be “bound together with unbelievers.” So a Christian widow is free to

remarry, but Paul adds, “In my opinion, she’s happier if she remains as she is.” She’ll be able to serve the Lord more freely. That’s the best, Paul says. But again, that depends on the person. That depends on the person’s gift as he taught back in verse 7. And most people don’t have the give of continence. Most people don’t have the gift of celibacy. Some very good and gifted people don’t.

We began this study mentioning John Calvin and how he came to Geneva. He was a young man. He was single at the time. But he later married and interestingly, he married a widow. She had two children. And the marriage was a blessing for him. It was a blessing for her, a blessing for both of them. Calvin was a scholar. He was a man of letters. But he wasn’t a very good housekeeper. I can just imagine what his desk was like. If it was like mine, he was a terrible housekeeper. And he didn’t look after his health very well. And so his friends recognized this and they recognized that he needed help, which means that he needed a wife, and he agreed. So he married Idelette de Bure. They had one child together, a boy who was born prematurely and died after a short time. And after nine years of marriage, Idelette died. Now not much is known about his marriage. In fact, Calvin wrote very little about himself, mentioned his experiences very infrequently in his voluminous writings, which is a difficulty for his biographers. But I think that makes it all the more significant that following her death, he did write something. He wrote, “I have been bereaved of the best friend of my life.” And that says everything, doesn’t it? She was a great support to him, and he to her through a very busy and difficult life and ministry.

Some men like Calvin are helped in the ministry by a wife. They’re not hindered by it. I think that’s probably true for most of us. We would not have a very effective ministry, a very efficient ministry if we didn’t have our wives to assist us in life and be a good companion as Calvin and his wife were to one another. Calvin’s best friend was his wife. It should be the same with all of us. Marriage, to sort of sum things up, is the norm. Under certain circumstances, the single life is preferable. It’s wiser. Calvin never remarried. He devoted the last years of his ministry, or the last years of his life to his ministry. But in normal times, and for those without a gift of continence or celibacy, marriage is a necessity. In fact, George Mueller, who had a long and very successful first marriage after his first wife died, remarried and had a very successful and excellent second marriage. It just depends on the individual and his or her circumstances.

That is Paul’s teaching here. He wants what will make them, as he puts it, free from concern. And what will most promote devotion to the Lord. Of course, that is counsel for Christians. The only way to be free from concern, really, is to be joined to Christ through faith by believing in Him. He has taken care of the sins and the future of every believer. Think of that. What reason for care and concern is there when we realize Christ has taken care of the sins and the eternal future of everyone who has believed in Him? Notice back in verse 39, Paul refers to the Christian husband’s death as falling asleep. That’s literally what he says. That’s the way Paul referred to Christian death. It’s like sleep because when we die, our bodies are laid in the grave. We are still alive just as when we lay down at night to sleep we’re alive and resting. In heaven the soul is alive and resting. It’s very conscious.

In fact, I think that those in heaven – in fact, I’m convinced those in heaven are more conscious and aware of things than they’ve ever been. But they’re resting and they’re at peace, and some day that soul will be reunited with its body and rise to new life in the resurrection, just as that person who lies down at night rises in the morning, we will rise in the sunrise of the resurrection when Christ comes again. Now that’s what the Christian has to look forward to. Knowing that, should and will give a person freedom from the concerns in life. The future is certain and the future is triumphant for every believer in Jesus Christ.

In fact, the future is glorious. Read Hebrews 2:10, and there we read how God is “bringing many sons to glory.” What does that mean? Well, I would say to you you could consider that statement for the rest of the day and the rest of the week and you won’t begin to penetrate what it is to be brought to glory. That’s our future and that’s certain. And that’s certain for every believer in Jesus Christ.

So we have reason to have no concern for the future. That’s what the Christian has, no concern. Should, we have reason to be completely at ease and rest. So may God help you if you’ve not believed in Him to trust in Him, to look to Him, put your faith in Him and help all of us to realize what we are in Christ, who we are in Him, not worry, but serve Him. The time is short. May God help us to use it. Let’s pray.

Father, we do thank You for the counsel that we are given in this passage. It’s not an easy text to analyze and understand. But it’s clear, much of it, that we’re to live for You.

We’re to have priorities in our life, priorities are to serve You, to live for eternity, not for time, to make decisions that will be to Your glory. Because if we make those decisions in

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that way, then they’ ll be to our benefit. Help us to think wisely, to make wise decisions. And for the young people who are here, we pray that they would think very clearly about this most important decision that they’ ll someday make, and that is to marry, and who to marry, how they should marry. Give them wisdom. Give all of us wisdom that we may serve You well. Thank You for what we have in Christ, who is the source of all wisdom, and we pray that we would live for Him and His glory. And it’ s in His name we pray, Amen.