

1Corinthians 18-05-13a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. Happy Mother's Day. Happy day to wives and spouses of every shape, size, and description.

It's providential perhaps that we are in a section of scripture that talks about marriage relationship both retrospective, prospective, and introspective. And we're going to resume that study this morning in 1 Corinthians chapter 7. Let's take a moment as we begin to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and our review and progress in this part of the letter to the Corinthians. It is very pertinent not only with regard to marriage but as a caution and an encouragement when it comes to our temptation to subjectivity.

This is an example, as we said last time, it's an example of what can happen when we let circumstances begin to dictate our priorities and our goals and our values rather than our standing in Christ defining and determining that view. So we're going to look at it in that light. So if marriage is not an issue in terms of figuring out if you should enter into it, stay into it, or get out of it, you can't tune out because the principles that apply are still very pertinent for other aspects of our life that are equally conditional in terms of what they might do to our view.

So let's take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer and then we'll begin. Father, we're grateful for this day and for the many ways that You have provided for us and blessed us and challenged us to give us opportunities to apply the things that we've learned, to operate within the viewpoint of life that is imparted by Your Holy Spirit as our circumstances are illuminated by Your Word. We're grateful most of all for the Lord Jesus Christ who has made our new life possible, our regeneration, our new birth.

We become possessors of so many wonderful potentials and the bright hope of the future where we will leave behind the parts of this life that drag us down and partake of our fallen and sinful nature and move into that glorious future where we can serve and we can know even as we are known. We pray that in the meantime as we prepare for that future day that this portion of Your Word will be ministered to each heart under the ministry of Your Spirit, that we will be encouraged, we'll be strengthened, we'll be challenged and motivated to live the life to which we have been called and to follow the example of our Lord Jesus who came to do Your will and dedicated His life to it as a man of prayer and as a man of faith and as a man of keeping his eyes on the prize. We look to the author and finisher of our own faith and hope that we can follow that wonderful example.

We pray that this time of fellowship and study of Your Word will be a blessing to each heart and we ask it in Jesus' name, Amen. Let's quickly take a look at our context. It should have a little bit of extra resonance for us now that we have covered it in some detail and I'm not going to review a lot of the exegesis.

My suggestion when it comes to Corinthians is to keep the big picture in view. It's easy to bog

down in a particular verse or a particular statement that Paul makes talking to the circumstance in Corinth and if we don't have that circumstance we tend to just coast and glide and wait for something that does catch our interest and to do that is to miss some very valuable truth here. So watch for the universal principle that is being applied to this specific case.

He's going to mention in our passage this morning that there is a present distress in Corinth and we don't know exactly what that distress is. There are some clues, we can guess at it, but we don't know exactly what it was. But I'm tempted to ask for a show of hands if anybody who doesn't currently have a present distress, is there anybody that doesn't currently have something that is a source of challenge and stress? I think we are all distressed in one way or another.

So the present distress for us may be different than their present distress and Paul is going to talk details in their area of challenge. So what we want to do is say what is he telling them to do that is applicable for my distress, my challenge, my daily source of not being real sure how I should proceed and I'm in danger of probably proceeding wrongly. So that's what we're watching for.

Don't think this is just get married or don't get married, get in, get out. To do that is to miss it. So chapter 7, 1 Corinthians.

Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me, and this is our clue that there were some issues that weren't a part of Paul's general teaching. He had been there, as we know, for almost three years and had given them a grounding in the faith. He gave them Christology, he gave them Soteriology, he gave them Pneumatology, he gave them Eschatology, he gave them all of the ologies and that's a wonderful foundation.

It's a good general view of life on earth, who we are, why we're here, where we're going, the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit, the plan and purpose of God the Father. All of that gives us a great background and context in which we then live our lives where we have to make decisions, we have to look at various factors and decide what we're going to think, how we're going to act, what we're going to say, and what our spiritual identity and our spiritual nature brings to bear on those circumstances that isn't available to an unbeliever. Our life ought to be different.

If we're not different, there's something wrong because we are reborn, we are regenerated, we have potentially the presence of all three members of the Godhead in our soul. And if that doesn't make a difference in how we think and how we act, something is egregiously wrong. To have the God of the universe, I was listening again yesterday to the words, to the lyrics to Come Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy, and if you listen to all of the verses, there's a verse that says, basically, look at the Lord Jesus Christ because on the ground your maker lies.

And if the presence of the Lord Jesus in our lives, what He has done for us, where He is about to take us, doesn't change our viewpoint, we need our viewpoint refreshed. And Paul is going to

do that here. Now, concerning the things of which you wrote to me, and then quote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman.

This was an idea that developed in Corinth after Paul left. Paul himself was not leading about a wife as the other apostles did, and the idea began to circulate that this was a good thing, and it seems to have been an expression of what we call asceticism. That's A-S-C-E-T, ascetic, asceticism.

This is self-denial, sort of trying to purge the flesh in order to be more holy. And in extreme forms, it takes excessive fasting, or sitting by the side of the road like Gandhi did, and denying yourself possessions, living a very harsh and scratchy hair shirt kind of life, thinking, well this will make me holy. And so in Corinth you have sort of a split, remember he had all those factions in the church we saw in earlier chapters, well one of these factions says all of this pursuit of pleasure and hedonistic promiscuity and so on, that's the problem, and so we're going to go the opposite direction, and we're going to eschew all contact, and not even touch a woman.

Not just avoid the temple prostitutes, not just avoid adultery or fornication, we're not going to do anything even if we're married. We're just going to be holy and devout, and be like nuns and monks, and just lead the celibate life regardless of marital status. And so Paul is turning his attention now, having already talked about the hedonists in previous chapters, now he's going to say, as for you who wrote me a letter and say, well because of all the problems with this prostitution and the rest of it, it's good if we just don't at all.

And we tend to do this, we'll take a thing to an extreme. There's a name for the fallacy in Latin, it's called *reductio ad absurdum*, you take a thing and just say, well, if people are having sexual problems, we ought to just dispense with sex altogether, just not do it at all. So Paul is addressing that, and this is the header.

Because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. And this doesn't mean everybody needs to find a partner and get married, it means husbands and wives need to engage in normal relations with each other. Have, this is in the sense of Adam knew his wife Eve, have is another euphemism for that whole area.

Let the husband render to his wife the affection to her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does, and likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. This idea of authority doesn't mean that you come in and exercise authority and make demands so much as the other person recognizes.

When we recognize that the civil government and the state government and the federal government have authority over us, then we think about that in the way we drive and the way we manage our property that's within the city limits, or we recognize ordinances and we change our behavior recognizing that authority. And it can be even just tradition and patriotism

and good practice. If the flag goes by, we stand at attention.

If someone says we're going to have a public prayer, we bow our heads. We recognize that there is an authority beyond ourselves and what we might feel like doing at the moment on a military base when they play colors, everybody stops. You get out of your car and stand at attention.

It is changing your behavior because there is something bigger than me, something more important than me and my personal desire or need at the moment that takes precedence. And so when Paul says that the wife has authority over the husband's body and vice versa, it means you pay attention and you're aware that there is something there beyond me, myself, and I. And we talked about that last time. So there are like five conditions.

He's talking about abstinence or celibacy. And he says if you are going to engage in non-contact, the man is not touching the woman, it needs to be with consent, limited duration, for spiritual purposes, fasting and prayer, you're going to focus on something that does in fact have even a higher priority than the needs of the body and you come together again so that Satan doesn't use this as a source of temptation and challenge your self-control, that you would then find other remedies. I say this as a concession, not as a commandment.

I wish that all men were even as I myself. And what does he mean? Does he mean I wish nobody was married and nobody had children and there was no future generation in the human race? What he says is everybody tends to see other believers in the light of their own gift. One of Paul's gifts, he has the gift and the office of apostle, but he also has a gift of celibacy.

What this means in practical terms, I don't know if God granted him a reduction in hormone influence or gave him an extra measure of self-control and of focus and of mental discipline. Because of being an apostle and his unique role in the first generation of the church and the second generation of the church, Paul has this gift where his time and his energy and his focus and his love is expressed toward these churches that he founds that he has the opportunity to impart what we know to be the essential corpus of New Testament truth. It largely comes through Paul.

And so in order to accomplish that within the few decades that he has after the Damascus Road, he is not encumbered with a wife. And God gives him a gift to where that doesn't turn into a temptation or an impediment for him. And he says, I could wish, he says, I could wish, he doesn't say I do wish.

He says, I could wish that everybody had my gift. Because look at how he is able to focus. The Lord Jesus himself, as you may recall, was not married.

And there's a reason for that. Can you imagine if all of this Dan Brown, you know, the Rosicrucians and the Knights Templar and all the rest of that stuff where, you know, Jesus and

Mary Magdalene had children and there's some sort of supernatural line floating around in the human race. What a distraction that would be.

And the Lord Jesus had this gift of not having to contend with all of the issues that come up with this interaction with the opposite sex. So, I could wish that all men were even as I myself, but each one has his own gift. And this is a wonderful reminder.

As you know, my first thought in this regard is there are a lot of people that have the gift of evangelism and they immediately think that, you know, I could wish that all men had the gift of evangelism. And they think everybody does have a responsibility for evangelism like they do and everybody ought to see the human race the way they do and everybody ought to devote themselves to evangelism as they do. But everybody's got their own gift and not everybody is cut out for evangelism.

And it's not a measure of your spiritual status if you've never led anybody to Christ. God may have called you to other ministries and other service. The whole body is not an eye or a hand and the whole body is not a mouth.

The body of Christ has a mouth and people with the gift of evangelism and also with the gift of preaching and teaching and proclaiming, it's a wonderful thing, it's a great thing. But it would be just as silly for everybody to try to be an evangelist as it would be for everybody to try to be a pastor or for everybody to try to have the gift of celibacy. It's just not, the whole body can't be one body part.

One of the scariest things I saw when I was a child back in the days of black and white TVs and scratchy audio and the little dot in the middle when you turned it off was a movie where there was this hand crawling around. And the whole entity was just a hand. And they made sort of a spoof of it later where this hand would spring up and grab onto a bumper and hitch a ride and follow people around.

But the original The Hand movie for a little kid was kind of spooky. And the idea is kind of spooky that you'd be reduced to just being one part. So Paul says to avoid all of these issues of promiscuity and fornication and adultery, wouldn't it be great if everybody just had the gift of celibacy? It wouldn't be an issue.

Nobody would have the drive and the temptation and the means, motive and opportunity to stray in this area. Wouldn't that be nice? But he says obviously that's not practical. Each has his own gift from God.

One in this manner and another in that. And so there are people that are gifted with raising a family. There are people that are gifted with being married and not having a family.

It's a gift. It's a calling. It's an opportunity where there is an emphasis in one area, there is a de-emphasis in another.

And everybody is different. Each is gifted in his own manner. So then in verse 8, But I say to the unmarried and to the widows, It is good for them if they remain even as I am, but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry.

It is better to marry than to burn. And what is the big idea here? If you can remain in your status quo, then do so. And this mainly has to do with conversion.

Nearly everybody in Corinth is a recent convert. There are very few believers that have been believers more than a year or two in Corinth. Paul just left.

And he basically organized that church out of new believers. The gospel of Christ came. People came to faith.

Well, this made a huge change in their lives. Because they were in a cosmopolitan, idolatrous, fornicating town where it was the norm to be that way. And so when Christ came and they had to learn about chastity and loyalty and commitment and one man, one woman, well, people didn't understand.

And parents and families and siblings and in-laws and out-laws couldn't figure this out. What do you mean? And there were people who were engaged. And well, who am I engaged to? I've come to faith and they haven't.

Or they've come to faith and I haven't. So he says, look, your circumstance should not be dictated by whether you are married or unmarried, whether you're in one status or another. Self-control, does that remind you of any memory verse that we've ever learned? How about Galatians and the fruit of the Spirit? Is marriage a fruit of the Spirit or celibacy a fruit of the Spirit? What in this section here is a fruit of the Spirit? Self-control.

If you are not able to bear and produce that fruit, then your circumstance may need to change. But your focus is the spiritual side. I will look to make a change in my single status here and get married if not being married is interfering with my ability to be spiritual and to bear the fruit of the Spirit, one of which is self-control.

If they cannot exercise self-control, and it says, let them marry. He doesn't say, then you marry. Because a lot of this is judging others, right? And it's interesting that this is not a direct command.

He says, I say to the unmarried and to the widows, it is good for them if they remain even as I am. He doesn't say, I say to you who are. This is almost a secondhand passing along.

But if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. It is better to not constantly fail in the area of self-control. Now to the married I command, and this is an echo of what the Lord commands.

A wife is not to depart from her husband. Even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or

be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife.

And these are those who are sensitive to the command of the Lord. So these are believers. If you are a believer and you have any pretense of trying to live a life to please God, then divorce is not an option.

No matter how bad things get, the power of God is greater. Grace is greater than all our sin. There is power available from God to mend any marriage between believers who are in any way, shape or form trying to live a life of faith.

If there is faith on both sides, then the marriage will succeed. It is a matter of pursuit. You don't have the option of bailing out and using a spiritual excuse.

If you are people of faith and you're married, then you don't divorce. That's what the Lord says. That's what Paul says.

And whatever it takes, if you grow toward the Lord, you will grow toward each other. He doesn't say, well, unless you're in love or unless you're infatuated or whatever. If you're believers, you can make it work.

Divorce is not an option. And really, when it says departing from in terms of separation, depart from and divorce here are two terms for the same idea. It doesn't mean that you might not need to get some space or have your own rooms or depart in some other way, but even if she departs, the woman in verse 11 is to remain unmarried.

Why? Because in God's eyes, people of faith, if they are married, they are married. And just because you're not living in the same house, you're still married. And to do anything different is adultery.

The Lord Jesus says the same thing. We saw that in Luke. And a husband is not to divorce his wife.

But to the rest, I not the Lord say, if any brother has a wife who is faithless, faithless, apostia, and the Holy Spirit dynamic is not going to function on that side. And this is a pretty permanent thing. It's not a temporary lapse.

This person is just without faith. They have taken a hard right or they have never come to faith. But there has to be the opportunity for the Holy Spirit to glue a marriage together.

Be not unequally yoked with the faithless. If any brother has a wife who is faithless and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who is faithless, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him.

For the faithless husband is sanctified by the wife, and the faithless wife is sanctified by the husband. Otherwise, your children would be unholy, but now they are holy. And what this means basically is your concept of blessing by association.

If there is one believer in the home, and everybody else is, if the spouse is willing to stick around. Think about Corinth. One person has been converted and the other has not.

That's going to be the case here. It is going to largely be salvation. They haven't really had time to get saved and then be faithless.

But it applies the same. Nobody knows in a lot of cases whether somebody was saved as a child, but now they've thrown it all over. Was Richard Dawkins saved as a child and now he's a flaming atheist? Christopher Hitchens? Bertrand Russell 100 years ago? Were they in church and believed in the Lord Jesus as a youth and then just went completely off the rails? Who knows? If they ever expressed faith, they're going to be resurrected and go into glory.

They may be in the darkness which is outside. Their flashlight may not even work in the darkness that they're in. But who knows? All we can judge is what is the current practice.

Is this person a person of faith or are they faithless? And that's a lot easier to determine. Somebody is either recognizing the Lord Jesus and when He says, this command is not I but the Lord, somebody that says, well, if the Lord says it, I need to pay attention, that's a person of faith. They believe in the Lord Jesus and they believe He has authority in what He teaches and that Paul is His apostle.

If they throw all that over and don't believe it, guess what? They're faithless. I don't care if they were saved as a youth or not. But if these faithless people are willing to tolerate the conversion of their spouse, God will treat the whole household as though they're all believers.

There's not going to be judgment. He will bless them. He will, for the sake of the one believer in the household, it's like the city of Sodom.

If there's ten righteous, God says, I won't destroy the city. There's hundreds, perhaps thousands of people in the five cities of the plain. No doubt there were thousands.

And if there were ten righteous in Sodom, God would not have sent the fire and brimstone because the city would be sanctified by the presence of that remnant. And the household will be treated by God and His angels as a sanctified household if there's even one believer in it. And everybody else gets blessing by association, and it's an opportunity to witness without a word.

It's an opportunity to persist in the face of kind of a unique challenge where you're at close quarters with faithless people on an ongoing basis. But you don't know if they're going to turn or not. Verse 16, how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? How do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife? Half of interpreters say Paul is expecting a positive answer to this.

You should stick it out because they might get saved. The other half of interpreters say the Greek construction here requires a negative answer, and you can't know that you're going to

save them, so don't stick around thinking, well, if I just endure, they'll come around and be people of faith. Because if they don't, you're going to get real discouraged.

Year after year after year, Paul said, how do you know they won't be saved? Well, I've stuck it out all this time, and they're not saved, or they're not faithful. So he says in 17, as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. This is the core.

This is the center. Circle verse 17. The examples that we've seen, as I mentioned at the beginning, this is in Corinth.

This is the present challenge in Corinth. Because of this radical conversion in the midst of a largely idolatrous, pagan, and promiscuous city, remember we talked about there was a verb in Greek to Corinthianize? It was kind of like when we call somebody a sodomite, it's named after a town. Well, they had a word in Greek, Corinthianize, and it meant hedonistic promiscuity.

And so suddenly there's a bunch of people that got saved and are pursuing their faith in Christ. Well, this has created all kinds of stress. Family doesn't understand.

Friends don't understand. Employers don't understand. Customers of business owners don't understand.

Well, I don't get it. We all used to go up and party at the temple, and now you won't go. Children are being ostracized.

Oh, your mother or your father or both are some of these weird Christian cult people. There's fights breaking out and stones being thrown, and there is stress. And I think, in my view, when Paul is getting ready to talk about the present distress in Corinth, now that these people have grown and it has really started to make a difference in their life, they are like a fresh green plant springing up in dry ground, and it's crumbling the soil around.

It's creating pressure and creating stress and creating challenge. So, they're saying, well, maybe I should make a change. Look at what he goes on to say.

As God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. This is what I ordain in all the churches. This is the second time.

He did this back in chapter 4. He's going to do it four times in this letter to the Corinthians to refer to what other churches do and what he has taught in other churches, because they've gotten this idea that maybe Paul's doctrinal teaching to them is not standard, and maybe they should listen to Apollos or listen to Peter or go back and try to find the words of Christ on some subject. And he said, this is the common teaching in all churches, and it applies to you as much as everybody else. This is their particular issue.

When you go to the region of Galatia, the issue there was legalism. It is different in different churches and in different areas. But here it is this radical change in life and in moral compass

and the fracture that it is creating for them in their surroundings.

And so, as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, and when we talk about calling, this word that comes from *kaleo*, to call, and the word calling, the verb for called is going to occur like eight times here. Was anyone called while? And we think, well, calling, that's like that Calvinist thing where whom he foreknew, he predestined, and whom he predestined, he called. Calvinist reformed theology thinks it's an effectual call.

When God calls, you're like a dog that never disobeys. When you call the dog, he always runs up to your ankle. And we're more like, you know, we have a bit more freedom of operation than that.

And so this call is not talking so much about the substance of God's call to salvation as it is when you responded to the call, when you became a believer, and you heard the call and you pursued that calling. Those who are called, to we who are called, it is righteousness. So as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, whatever circumstance you were in when you heard the gospel and trusted, when you heard the teaching of the word of God and became a person pursuing the life of faith, whatever your circumstance was, walk in that circumstance.

Because here's what was happening in Corinth. They were saying, well, I got saved and this has upset the apple cart, so I should make a change. I'm married, but now I'm a new creation in Christ, so maybe I should dissolve this marriage.

Or I was single, but now it's us and them and there's the Corinthians on the outside and us in our group in the church, and so maybe I should find somebody in the church to marry and form an alliance. Maybe we should try to mend fences. So people were using their faith as a rationale to change their circumstance.

Using their faith as an argument to change their circumstance. Well, I'm a Christian, so I should change this in my life. I should change that in my life.

I'm a brunette, I should become a blonde now that I'm a Christian. I'm uncircumcised, I should become circumcised. I'm a slave, I should be free.

I'm this, I should become that. And these are not in areas of moral suasion. This isn't, I'm immoral, I should become moral.

This is, I'm a car dealer, I should become a real estate agent. I should make a change, and the reason is my faith. And he says, God called you when you were unmarried, or married, or a slave, or a master, or a circumcised person, or an uncircumcised person.

God thought you were okay in that circumstance and called you and you responded. So the fact that you have been called and you've responded is not, in and of itself, an argument to change that circumstance. You can see how, once we parse the principle here, it is going to have wide

application in our own situation.

Verse 18, Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. In other words, if you were a Jew, and you came to faith in Christ, that's no reason to cast off your Jewish identity, to stop observing the feasts. We know that Paul continued to observe the feasts and go to Jerusalem and to operate in his heritage for decades after he met the Lord on the Damascus Road.

He didn't expunge from his record all of his Jewish background. He didn't stop being what he was when the Lord Jesus called him to be an apostle. He's still got that identity and he doesn't have to throw it all aside.

There's nothing sinful about being Jewish. There's nothing sinful about seeing the fulfillment of the Old Testament feasts and the Old Testament rituals in Christ and celebrating that as you observe them. He doesn't have to stop being Jewish because he's come to faith.

If they were uncircumcised, they don't have to follow what was happening over in Galatia where everybody was saying, well, you need to start acting Jewish. You need to get circumcised and start observing the Sabbath and the feast days and these other rituals that we have. You need to make a change because that will make you more spiritual.

If you were called as a Jew, casting off your Judaism isn't going to make you any more holy because there's nothing intrinsically wrong with Judaism. Now, what do they need to cast off if they have come to faith in Christ? Promiscuity, adultery, fornication, schisms and divisions, lawsuits. The first part of this letter covered here are evil things that you do need to separate from and stop doing.

But it's more complex than that. You're not under law. And there are things where there is no law.

In this chapter he says, there's no word from the Lord on this. But what is the principle that applies? Changing your circumstance, changing your appearance, changing your components of your life where there's no moral issue doesn't make you more spiritual. And being spiritual doesn't mean that you need to make a change in any of those areas.

God called you in that circumstance? You can't use your faith as an excuse to go change that circumstance. Especially where it affects other people. So, you don't have to cut off your relationships with the circumcised.

If you're a Jew, you can still be friendly. You don't have to treat them like a heathen and a tax collector. That's going to be up to them.

If they want to distance themselves from you because you're now a Christian, let them be the ones to depart and to dissolve that conversation. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Now this is a big thing for a Pharisee to say.

That circumcision is nothing? What does he mean here? Of course it was a big issue with the Judaizers. It was really something. But why is he saying circumcision and uncircumcision is nothing? Keeping the commandments of God is what matters.

You have that in italics here, but that's essentially the meaning. We have to supply that in English. In other words, you're not any more holy if you're a Jewish Christian than if you're a Gentile Christian.

If you were called as uncircumcised or you were called as circumcised, trying to become one or the other doesn't advance you spiritually. It's not an issue in the spiritual realm. Keeping the commandments of God.

Notice there's no commandment to be circumcised. There's no commandment to be uncircumcised or to distance yourself from Judaism. No longer shalt thou go to the temple.

Thou shalt go to Mount Calvary and not Mount Zion. There's no such command. There's no moral principle that says you need to make a change here.

And what people were doing is failing to change in areas where they needed to and trying to change in areas where they didn't need to. And so he spent the first part of this letter dealing with the areas where they needed to make a change and had not. Lawsuits, divisions, schisms, promiscuity.

Make a change. But what they're doing instead in the name of change is changing things that don't need changing. So does that ever happen in our life? Do we say, well, I'm going to justify what I secretly kind of wanted to do anyway in the name of Christ or in the name of spirituality? And he's arguing against that.

There is no commandment of God in these areas. And that's what counts. Therefore, verse 20, let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called.

And there's a little play on words there. The same calling. Some people were called to presently be unmarried.

Some people were called to be married. Some people were called to have a function as a slave. Some people were called to be free.

And that's a circumstantial calling. And that calling shouldn't change because of the second calling in which he was called to Christ. Your calling to Christ doesn't change your circumstantial calling where there's not a moral component.

Make sense so far? What is the application? We have to be careful when we decide that we are going to make some sort of change in the name of our faith. If it makes sense from the standpoint of the commands of God, we are not to... For example, I know people, and I'm one of them, that have made a geographical move in order to be closer to teaching of the Word of

God. Now, is there a command of God in that regard or not? Well, forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is.

And if you find yourself unable... Now, in this age of technology, we're able, and we don't necessarily have to make the kind of geographic move we used to in order to... Before recordings, before internet and so on, if you wanted the teaching of the Word of God from something other than a book that you got in the mail, you had to go live in a community where there was a healthy fellowship and a presentation of the Word of God that would feed us and nourish us because we are to learn and grow and partake of God's Word. And if you needed to make a change to do that, that's in the commands of God. But if there is a healthy fellowship where you are, or the means to have it, then you don't necessarily need to make a change in the name of faith.

You could justify something that isn't justifiable. You could say, well, I'm currently married to somebody who's faithless, but they're willing to live with me, but I should make a change in my marriage and marry somebody that's really, really faithful like me. And Paul says, don't do that.

You shouldn't make a change in the name of your faith that doesn't need making from the commandments of God. And there's no commandment of God that says you must separate from somebody who is willing to live with you even though they're faithless. So this flows naturally out of the preceding context.

And so we have to examine ourselves and make sure that we are in the faith when we decide or start to consider making changes. Why are we making the change? Why is somebody remaining celibate? Remaining celibate might be a good thing. Paul says, it'd be great if you were like me, if everybody had that gift.

But if you're being celibate because you think it's spiritual and that the asceticism gains you something, that's a faulty rationale. So this is all about changing one's status, whether it is marriage, whether it is employment, whether it is social in terms of circumcision, uncircumcision. Making a change, justifying it on spiritual grounds, you have to be really sure that that's what it is for and that it enhances and enables the fruit of the Spirit and isn't an excuse to do something that really doesn't have a moral component.

So we're to verse 21 and that's where we'll pick up when we come back from the break.