

**Commentary on First Corinthians chapters 7 verses 17-40 and chapter 8
by Chuck Smith 9.3.23**

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September memory verse Isaiah 40:8 (NKJV) The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever."

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Chapter 7:17-40

But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all churches ([1Cr 7:17](#)).

Now he deals with what condition you were in when God called you.

Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God. Therefore let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called ([1Cr 7:18-20](#)).

When God saved you, were you an uncircumcised Gentile? Then don't bother about going through the Jewish rite of circumcision. Remain as you were when God called you.

Now, if you were a servant when God called you, don't worry about it if you can be free, then use your freedom rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman ([1Cr 7:21-22](#)):

Now, you may still be a servant as far as man is concerned, but you are free now and you are God's freeman.

also he that is called, being free, becomes Christ's servant ([1Cr 7:22](#)).

So, the calling in where I was called, abide in that calling. Don't try to change things radically after you've become a Christian, unless the life that you were living, or the occupation that you had is so totally antagonistic towards Christian principals that you have got to get out.

You were bought with a price; therefore don't be the servants of men ([1Cr 7:23](#)).

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If you are a servant of man, realize that you are a servant of Jesus Christ. And so that is basically where we all are, servants of Jesus Christ.

Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God. Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful ([1Cr 7:24-25](#)).

Now we are dealing with an interesting area here, and there are three possible interpretations. There are those that say that Paul is talking now to the fathers who have daughters who are virgins. And that he is dealing with the situation of whether or not you allow your daughter to get married.

There is the second that, again, takes in the cultural aspects. There were those people who were living together and even sleeping in the same bed, but not having conjugal relationship. And even... they were just sort of... the trial marriage kind of thing but without the sex aspect of it, seeing if you get along living together, yet not entering into a physical relationship. This was a common practice in those days there in Corinth.

The third thought is that there were also those who did get married, but felt it was more spiritual not to have sex even in marriage. And I personally feel that Paul is probably referring to this third category. The language sort of precludes a father having a daughter who is a virgin and giving her in marriage, the language sort of precludes that. I think that it probably is referring to this third concept of "we are more spiritual because we don't have sex. Yes, we are married, but my wife is still a virgin." Weird! I couldn't handle that, but this is what I feel was the issue that Paul was addressing in this part. "Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I'll give my judgment, as one who has obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful."

I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, it is good for a man so to be. Are you bound unto a wife? Don't then seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Then don't seek a wife ([1Cr 7:26-27](#)).

Again, Paul is saying this under the whole umbrella of time is so short. Later on, when he wrote to the church of Ephesus, realizing that the coming of Jesus evidently wasn't going to be immediate, he used the marriage relationship as a beautiful example of the deep relationship that exists between Christ and His church, and uses it in one of the most beautiful illustrations of relationship that can exist.

So, are you married? Don't seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Don't seek a wife.

But and if you married, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she has not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: and I would just spare you ([1Cr 7:28](#)).

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He is saying, "Hey, marriage is not always what it is trumped up to be. You can have difficulties in marriage."

This I say, brethren, the time is short: it remains, that both they that have wives be as though they had none ([1Cr 7:29](#));

Now, that has to be interpreted in the context. For in the context he said, "He that is married cares for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. He that is not married actually just seeks to please God." So, when he says that they that are married should be as though they are not married, he is just saying that you should be concerned in pleasing God. That should be your primary concern.

And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoice not; and they that buy, as though possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passes away ([1Cr 7:30-31](#)).

Time is short. He is actually saying, "We don't have time, really, to get involved in marital relationships. We don't have time to indulge in grief or sorrow. We don't have time for partying and revelry. We don't have time to amass possessions. We are in the world, but let's not abuse it. Let us use it; we have got to live. We have got to eat so do what you have to, but don't get overly involved, for the fashion of the world is passing away, or is rapidly passing away."

So, as Paul was looking at the situation in his day, at the deterioration of the whole social scene of the things taking place, he gives these warnings. Time is short, things are rapidly passing away, we really don't have time for the extraneous.

But I would have you without this carefulness ([1Cr 7:32](#)).

Full of care is a better way... we understand that better. I would keep you freed from that fullness of care, worry.

He that is unmarried cares for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married cares for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married cares for the things of the world, how she may please her husband. And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, that you may attend upon the Lord without distraction ([1Cr 7:32-35](#)).

So he is just saying that in giving yourself completely to serving the Lord, a wife can be an encumbrance, can be a hindrance. You have to now take her into consideration, and your real interest is pleasing her. That is proper. We should be concerned, fellows, in how to please our wives. And you wives should be concerned in how to please your

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husbands. And we need to take careful consideration of these things. It is proper. It is right.

I think that, again, a man has to be gifted to live a single life. And that if God has not gifted you, as the scripture says, he who has found a wife has found a good thing and favor of the Lord. Paul is talking out of the concept that time is so short; we don't have time for these things now. And it could be that we are approaching that kind of a situation again as we come to the end of the age. However, the Bible does not speak despairingly of marriage, but does hold it up as God's plan and God's purpose for man. It is the natural thing. It is unnatural not to be married.

But if a man thinks that he behaving himself uncomely towards his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sins not: let them marry. Nevertheless he that stands steadfast in his heart, having no necessity ([1Cr 7:36-37](#)),

Having no necessity is an important clause.

but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, he does well. So then he that gives her in marriage does well; but he that gives her not in marriage does better. The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord. But she is happier if she so abides, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God ([1Cr 7:37-40](#)).

Now, in my judgment, she would be happier to remain unmarried. It is an interesting situation. It must be looked at in the light of the conditions in Corinth and in the light of Paul's concept that time was short and it was almost over.

Chapter 8

Now, the second issue:

Now as touching the things offered unto idols, we know that we have all knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up ([1Cr 8:1](#)).

A contrast between knowledge and love. We know we have all knowledge. Now, there was a problem in those days, because idolatry was so prevalent, most of the meat that you would buy in the marketplace had first a portion of it been offered unto the idols, the pagan gods. When they would butcher their meat they would take portions of it and offer it as a burnt offering unto their gods, and then the priests would get their part and the rest would be given back to the person, and oftentimes it would be taken to the market and sold in the market.

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Now, many Christians had great difficulty with their own conscience in eating meat that had been offered as a sacrifice to a pagan god. This really troubled them. But there were others in Corinth who boasted of their knowledge, "Well, that is nothing. That is just a stone and not a god, so it doesn't make any difference. I have enough knowledge to realize that that is nothing at all and therefore I can eat the meat without being troubled in my conscience over it."

Now, Paul is sort of addressing himself to these that are taking that liberty, because of their knowledge, and offending the weaker brethren.

So touching those things offered to idols, we know that we all have knowledge ([1Cr 8:1](#)).

We know that the idol is nothing. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up ([1Cr 8:1](#)).

One is filled with air, the other has something solid.

And if any man thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know ([1Cr 8:2](#)).

And this is so true. The man who thinks he knows the most usually knows the least, because the more you know, the more you know you don't know.

Now, the person who comes along and sort of puffed up and says, "Hey, I'm an expert and I can give you all the answers," he knows the least. If any man thinks he knows anything, he knows nothing as he ought to know, because if you really know, you know you don't know. So, if you think you know, it is a pretty good indication that you don't know very much about it. Man, poor man, so ignorant in that which he knows best.

But if any man loves God ([1Cr 8:3](#)), Remember, knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

the same is known of him. As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered and sacrificed unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For though there be many that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him ([1Cr 8:3-6](#)).

So we know that these idols are nothing. We know that there is only one true living God, one Lord.

Howbeit there is not in every man this knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled ([1Cr 8:7](#)).

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Now, coming in Corinth, growing up in Corinth, you grew up in a pagan situation. You grew up worshipping this idol. You grew up eating meat in the temple of the idol. They would have restaurants there, and they would offer meat in a ceremony and sacrifice to the idol, and then they would roast it and you would go in and eat the meat in the temple and fellowship, or worship, the idol or the god. Now, you have embraced Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, but having come out of the pagan practice of eating the meat offered in sacrifices to these idols, you have great difficulty continuing that, because for so long you did eat it thinking you were eating in worship to this particular idol, so that as a Christian now it offends your conscience. It bothers you to do it. It gets your conscience. So, Paul said, "Unto this time there are those that are having trouble with this in their conscience, and because their conscience is weak, they are defiled."

But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we any the better; neither, if we eat not, are we any the worse ([1Cr 8:8](#)).

Eating meat or not eating meat has absolutely nothing to do with my spirituality or my relationship with God. And we can carry this further.

But let us take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to those that are weak. For if any man sees thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idols temple, shall not the conscience of him that is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols ([1Cr 8:9-10](#));

Now, let us say that I felt that there was absolutely nothing wrong with my having an occasional martini. Now, that is a hypothesis, because I do feel that there is something wrong, even with an occasional. For me, very wrong. My conscience would wipe me out. I have a weak conscience in that regard. But, let us say that I had one, for it is not what goes in that defiles a man, but what comes out. And so I felt that I could drink. And unfortunately, there are many prominent ministers that do feel this, they have the liberty to drink if they so desire. But, let us say that I was one of those fellows and I felt a great liberty to drink, if I so desired. And here is a fellow who has been an alcoholic, has accepted Christ, has been delivered from his alcoholism, and he goes into a restaurant. And there sitting at the bar is Chuck drinking. "Hey, he's my pastor. And if he can drink, then I guess it is all right for me to drink." But yet, he knows it is wrong, because he knows the problem he has with it, but he is emboldened to go ahead and do it, because he sees my liberty. And yet, when he does it, he has this conscience that is just tormenting him. And I say, "Well, I have superior spiritual knowledge. I understand the scriptures. And I understand this," and I go on and say, "Hey, look, I have the freedom to do it," and so on. I could actually be an instrument to destroy this weaker brother because of my exercising of my knowledge or liberty that I have.

And through thy knowledge [Paul said] shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you are actually sinning against Christ. Wherefore, if meat makes my brother to offend, I will

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eat no flesh while the world stands, lest I would be an offense to my brother ([1Cr 8:11-13](#)).

Now, that is love, and that is walking in love. And love seeks to build up. Knowledge puffs up. And here were these Corinthians, and it was that kind of a situation. They said, "Hey, the idols are nothing." And they were going into the idols' temples and there they had good prices and good barbecues. And so they were saying, "The idol is nothing. So what! It is nothing. We can go in there and eat." They were going in and eating. But the weak brothers who were really troubled over this issue would see them sitting there in the idols eating the meat, and it would bother them. But they thought, "He's the deacon in the church, or he's an elder in the church, and if he can do it then I guess I can do it," but they couldn't.

This thing called conscience, you really can't violate it. I don't care what a person may tell you. To him that esteems the thing to be wrong, to him it is wrong. And you better obey that conscience that you have, because if you don't, it can get you into serious trouble.

Paul said, "Do you have freedom? Have it to yourself. Don't use it as a stumblingblock to a weak brother, but walk in love." Knowledge is good to have, it is good to know, it is good to be freed, but knowledge can puff up, and we should seek to build up. Love builds up. Seek to build up one another in the love of Jesus Christ.