

# CHAPTER 7

## INTRODUCTION TO 1 CORINTHIANS 7

In this, chapter, various cases concerning marriage being proposed to the apostle, are answered by him; and he discourses of the nature, use, and end of marriage, and of the duties of married persons to one another; and gives advice to such as were unmarried, and points at the advantages of a single state, where it can be continued in without danger. Some of the Corinthians having written to him upon these heads, he returns for answer in general, that abstinence from marriage was most advisable; that is, at that time of persecution, and by those who had the gift of continence, and for reasons after mentioned, ([1 Corinthians 7:1](#)) though, in order to avoid fornication, it was absolutely necessary for truth who had not that gift to enter into it, and act agreeably thereunto, ([1 Corinthians 7:2](#)) and therefore advises both parties in such a state to yield due benevolence to each other, ([1 Corinthians 7:3](#)) giving this as a reason for it, that neither of them had power over their own bodies, but over each other's, ([1 Corinthians 7:4](#)) wherefore abstinence from the marriage bed ought not to be but with the following limitations; that it be by mutual agreement, and only for a time, and that only for the sake of devotion but that they come together again, lest Satan should take an advantage of their incontinency, and tempt them to evil, ([1 Corinthians 7:5](#)) though in all this the apostle would be understood to speak, not in an authoritative, but a permissive way, and rather by way of counsel than of command, ([1 Corinthians 7:6](#)) and expresses his hearty wish, that everyone was, and would continue, in a single state, as he himself; though he corrects himself by observing, that it was not the pleasure of God to bestow the gift of continency on everyone, and therefore suggests, that it was right for everyone to act according to the gift he had received, ([1 Corinthians 7:7](#)) and then addresses persons in a single state, whether they had ever been married or not, and advises them so to abide, partly by his own example, and partly by the profitableness of it, ([1 Corinthians 7:8](#)) but if they had not the gift of continency, his counsel is, that they enter into a marriage state, giving this reason for it, that it is better to enter into such a state than to be inflamed with lust, ([1 Corinthians 7:9](#)) and then he directs himself to married

persons; and these he commands, not in his own name, but in the name of the Lord, to live together; and particularly, that the wife should not leave her husband for any trivial matter, or on account of any difference that might arise between them, ([1](#) Corinthians 7:10) and that if she so did, she ought to remain unmarried, or seek to be reconciled to her husband, and come to him again; and, on the other hand, the husband ought not to divorce his wife, unless in case of adultery and wilful obstinate desertion, ([1](#) Corinthians 7:11). And as to another case of conscience which was moved unto him, whether a believer, having married an unbeliever, should live together; he answers, that if a Christian brother had married an unbelieving wife, and she thought fit to continue with him, he should not put her away, ([1](#) Corinthians 7:12). And so a Christian woman that had married an unbelieving husband, if it was his pleasure to dwell with her, she ought not to forsake him, ([1](#) Corinthians 7:13) giving this reason for it, because they were legally married to each other, or otherwise their children must be reckoned bastards; whereas by maintaining the validity of their marriage, and abiding by it, they would appear to be legitimate, ([1](#) Corinthians 7:14) but if the unbeliever, whether man or woman, thinks fit to desert the believing wife or husband, so be it, the party deserted may make themselves easy, nor are they under obligation to remain unmarried: however, as they are called to peace they ought to seek it, and endeavour to live quietly together, ([1](#) Corinthians 7:15) and that for this reason, because they may be the means of the conversion, and so of the salvation of the unbelieving party, ([1](#) Corinthians 7:16) hence the apostle takes an occasion to exhort every man in general to walk and abide in the calling wherein he is called, this being an order he had given to all the churches, ([1](#) Corinthians 7:17) and which he exemplifies by particular instances, as that those who are called in circumcision, or in uncircumcision, should abide so, ([1](#) Corinthians 7:18) because these are nothing, or indifferent things, which may be, or may not be; but keeping the commandments is binding, and not to be dispensed with, ([1](#) Corinthians 7:19) wherefore the general rule is repeated, that it might be the more regarded and observed, ([1](#) Corinthians 7:20). And another instance given, illustrating it, as that if a man is called while a servant, he should make himself easy, and continue so; though if he can have his freedom it is most eligible, ([1](#) Corinthians 7:21). The reason persuading him to be satisfied with his condition is, because he that is called by grace, though a servant in a civil sense, is the Lord's freeman in a spiritual sense; and, on the other hand, he who is free in a civil sense when called, is in a spiritual sense a servant of

Christ, (~~4172~~1 Corinthians 7:22) as clearly appears by his being bought with the price of his blood; and therefore neither one nor the other should be servants of men in matters of religion, (~~4173~~1 Corinthians 7:23). Wherefore, as before, it becomes every man to abide in the station in which he is called, until it please God in his providence to change his situation, (~~4174~~1 Corinthians 7:24). After this the apostle returns to his former subject about marriage, and addresses the virgins particularly, concerning whom he declares he had no express commandment from the Lord, but however was willing to give his judgment and advice, with all sincerity and uprightness, as one that had the honour to be counted faithful by the Lord himself, (~~4175~~1 Corinthians 7:25) and his judgment was, that considering the present persecution of the churches of Christ, it was better for single persons, men or women, to remain so, (~~4176~~1 Corinthians 7:26) though he advises those that were married by no means to desert one another, or seek to dissolve the marriage bond; as, on the other hand, those that were free from it, he would not have them seek out for a wife, (~~4177~~1 Corinthians 7:27) though should they, it would not be criminal in them; and whether young men or maidens, it was not unlawful for them to marry, only it was not so convenient for the present; and such therefore must expect trouble in the world, (~~4178~~1 Corinthians 7:28). However, it was proper, since time was short, and every worldly enjoyment was fading and perishing, that care be taken that there be no abuse of any, in whatsoever state and condition, or circumstance men were in; neither to be too much depressed with afflictive providences, nor too much elated with prosperous ones; and by no means to indulge to lasciviousness and luxury, (~~4179~~1 Corinthians 7:29-31). And whereas the married life is a careful one, and the apostle was desirous the persons he writes to should be without any distressing care, he advised so strongly as he did to a single state; and in order to persuade to it, he puts the difference between an unmarried and a married man, who though they both had their cares, yet about different things; the former about divine and religious things, in order to please the Lord; the latter about worldly things, in order to please his wife, (~~4173~~1 Corinthians 7:32,33). And just the like difference he observes there is between a wife and a virgin; the virgin, she is concerned about and taken up in religious matters, that she may increase in holiness, both inward and outward; and the wife is engaged in worldly and domestic affairs, which engross her thoughts and time, in order to please her husband, (~~4173~~1 Corinthians 7:34) wherefore the advice he had given to continue single, was manifestly for the profit and advantage of such persons in spiritual things; though he gave it with no design to

ensnare any, who had not the gift of continence, but advised to it, when it could be done, in a comely manner, and that they might attend upon the worship of God, without distraction by worldly cares for their families, (~~4175~~1 Corinthians 7:35) but in case, when a virgin is ripe for marriage, and there is a necessity for it, it is by no means advisable in parents to behave uncomely to her, and refuse to marry her, and so deprive her of the remedy against incontinence; when such is the case, she ought to marry, that being not sinful, yea, it would be sinful to do otherwise, (~~4176~~1 Corinthians 7:36) yet where there is no necessity, where persons have the gift of continency, are steadfastly determined not to marry, but, to keep their virginity, this is commendable as well as profitable, (~~4177~~1 Corinthians 7:37) whence this conclusion is drawn, that they that marry do well, rather than burn in lust, or commit sin, but they that do not marry, having the gift of continency, do better, both for themselves, and for the Lord, (~~4178~~1 Corinthians 7:38). And whereas whilst an husband is living, the wife is bound by law to continue with him; and when he is dead, she may marry whom she will, So be it she seeks the Lord, and has his glory in view, (~~4179~~1 Corinthians 7:39) yet in the judgment of the apostle she would be a much more happy person should she continue a widow; and this was not only his own private judgment, but he had reason to believe it was according to the mind of the Spirit of God, (~~4174~~1 Corinthians 7:40).

**Ver. 1.** *Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me,* etc.]

Though the false apostles had greatly influenced the members of this church, yet there were many among them that had a very great respect for the apostle, and kept up a correspondence with him, though at a distance from him, by writing; in which way they informed him of their doubts and difficulties, that arose in their minds about certain things, and desired his judgment in them, to which they paid a very great deference. The things they wrote to him about, here referred to, may be collected from the contents of this chapter, and some others following; as whether a Christian man ought not to abstain from the use of women; whether a believer ought to live with an unbelieving yoke fellow; whether such as had been circumcised should not make use of some methods to draw on the foreskin of their flesh; whether apprentices, who were called by the grace of God, ought to serve out their time with their masters; and concerning celibacy or virginity, the eating of things offered to idols, and the maintenance of ministers: and he begins with the first; to which he answers,

*it is good for a man not to touch a woman*; which is to be understood, not of merely touching a woman, which can neither be criminal, nor in all cases inexpedient, or be attended with any ill, or dangerous consequences; nor of the matrimonial contract, which is lawful and honourable; but of the act of carnal copulation with a woman: in this sense the Jews use the phrase,

“there are three (they say <sup>f89</sup>) that fled from transgression, and the blessed God joined his name with them; and they are these, Joseph, and Joel, and Phalti. Joseph, as appears from what is said, (<sup>-13815</sup>Psalm 81:5) “a testimony in Joseph is his name”; what is the meaning of the phrase “in Joseph?” this testifies concerning him, **rpjy wp tçab [gn al ç**, “that he did not touch Potiphar’s wife” (i.e. he did not lie with her); Jael, as is clear from what is said, (<sup>-07048</sup>Judges 4:18) “and Jael went forth to meet Sisera, and she covered him with a mantle”; what is the meaning of the phrase, **hkymçb?** (which is rendered, “with a mantle”); our Rabbins here (in Babylon) say with a linen cloth; but our Rabbins there (in the land of Israel) say with bed clothes; says Resh Lekish, if we run over the whole Scripture, we shall not find any household goods so called; wherefore what is it? it is all one as **hk ymç**, “my name is thus”: and the meaning is, my name witnesses concerning her, **[çr wtwā hb [gn al ç**, “that that wicked one (Sisera) did not touch her” <sup>f90</sup>; (i.e. had not carnal knowledge of her;); Phalti, as is evident from hence, one Scripture says, “and Saul gave Michal his daughter to Phalti”, (<sup>-02544</sup>1 Samuel 25:44) and another Scripture says Phaltiel; sometimes he is called Phalti, and sometimes he is called Phaltiel; who takes Phalti? and who gives Phaltiel? but I testify concerning him; **dwd tçab [gn al ç**, “that he did not touch David’s wife”; (i.e. did not lie with her;)”

(see <sup>-02016</sup>Genesis 20:6). And in this sense also is the word “touch” used, both by Greek and Latin authors. The apostle’s meaning is not that it is unlawful to marry, or that it is sinful to lie with a woman in lawful wedlock; but that it is much better, and more expedient on several accounts, to abstain from the use of women, when persons have the gift of continency.

**Ver. 2.** *Nevertheless, to avoid fornication*, etc.] Or “fornications”; meaning either the frequent commission of that sin; or all sorts of uncleanness and

pollution, which may be avoided by wedlock, and the proper use of the marriage bed, where the gift of continency is not bestowed: wherefore to prevent unlawful copulations, as of single persons with one another, or of a married person with a single one, the apostle advises, as being what is right and proper,

*let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband*; that is, let every man that has a wife enjoy her, and make use of her, and let every woman that has an husband, receive him into her embraces; for these words are not to be understood of unmarried persons entering into a marriage state, for the words suppose them in such a state, but of the proper use of the marriage bed; and teach us that marriage, and the use of it, are proper remedies against fornication; and that carnal copulation of a man with a woman ought only to be of husband and wife, or of persons in a married state; and that all other copulations are sinful; and that polygamy is unlawful; and that one man is to have but one wife, and to keep to her; and that one woman is to have but one husband, and to keep to him.

**Ver. 3.** *Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence*, etc.] The Syriac version renders it, **byj ttmd abwj** , “due love”; and so the Arabic; and may include all the offices of love, tenderness, humanity, care, provision, and protection, which are to be performed by the husband to his wife; though it seems chiefly, if not solely, here to respect what is called, **htn** [ , (<sup>f91</sup>Exodus 21:10) “her marriage duty”, as distinct from food and raiment to be allowed her; and what is meant by it the Jewish doctors will tell us: one says <sup>f91</sup>, it is **hj mh çymçt** , “the use of the marriage bed”; and, says another <sup>f92</sup>, **hyl [ abl** , “it is to lie with her”, according to the way of all the earth. And so the phrase here, “due benevolence”, is an euphemism, and designs the act of coition; which as it is an act of love and affection, a sign of mutual benevolence, so of justice; it is a due debt from divine ordination, and the matrimonial contract. The Jewish doctors have fixed and settled various canons <sup>f93</sup> concerning the performance, of this conjugal debt: and the apostle may not be altogether without some view to the rules and customs which obtained in his own nation.

*And, likewise also the wife unto the husband*; she is not to refuse the use of the bed when required, unless there is some just impediment, otherwise she

comes under the name of *tdrwm*, a “rebellious wife”; concerning whom, and her punishment, the Jews<sup>f94</sup> give the following rules:

“a woman that restrains her husband from the use of the bed, is called rebellious; and when they ask her why she rebels, if she says, because it is loathsome to me, and I cannot lie with him; then they oblige him to put her away directly, without her dowry; and she may not take any thing of her husband’s, not even her shoe strings, nor her hair lace; but what her husband did not give her she may take, and go away: and if she rebels against her husband, on purpose to afflict him, and she does to him so or so, and despises him, they send to her from the sanhedrim, and say to her, know thou, that if thou continuest in thy rebellion, thou shalt not prosper? and after that they publish her in the synagogues and schools four weeks, one after another, and say, such an one has rebelled against her husband; and after the publication, they send and say to her, if thou continuest in thy rebellion, thou wilt lose thy dowry; and they appoint her twelve months, and she has no sustenance from her husband all that time; and she goes out at the end of twelve months without her dowry, and returns everything that is her husband’s.”

This account, with a little variation, is also given by Maimonides<sup>f95</sup>.

**Ver. 4.** *The wife hath not power of her own body*, etc.] To refrain the use of it from her husband; or to prostitute it to another man:

*but the husband*; he has the sole power over it, and may require when he pleases the use of it:

*and likewise also the husband has not power over his own body*: to withhold due benevolence, or the conjugal debt from his wife; or abuse it by self-pollution, fornication, adultery, sodomy, or any acts of uncleanness: but the wife; she only has a power over it, a right to it, and may claim the use of it: this power over each other’s bodies is not such, as that they may, by consent, either the husband allow the wife, or the wife the husband, to lie with another.

**Ver. 5.** *Defraud ye not one the other*, etc.] By withholding due benevolence, denying the use of the marriage bed, refusing to pay the conjugal debt, and which is called a “diminishing of her marriage duty”, (<sup>(4210)</sup>Exodus 21:10) where the Septuagint use the same word “defraud”, as

the apostle does here; it is what both have a right to, and therefore, if either party is denied, it is a piece of injustice, it is properly a defrauding; though with proper conditions, such as follow, it may be lawful for married persons to lie apart, and abstain from the use of the bed, but then it should never be done,

*except it be with consent*: because they have a mutual power over each other's bodies, and therefore the abstinence must be voluntary on each side; otherwise injury is done to the person that does not consent, who is deprived against will of just right; but if there is agreement, then there is no defrauding, because each give up their right; and such a voluntary abstinence is commended by the Jews<sup>f96</sup>;

“everyone that lessens the use of the bed, lo, he, is praiseworthy; and he who does not make void, or, cause to cease the due benevolence, but *wtça t[dm*, “by consent of his wife”;

i.e. he also is praiseworthy: another condition of this abstinence is that it be only for a time; which shall be agreed unto, and fixed by both parties; not for ever which would be contrary to the will of God; the institution and end of marriage, and of dangerous consequence to either party. The Jews allow of a vow of continency for a while; and which they limit to different persons; thus<sup>f97</sup>,

“if a man by a vow excludes, wife from the use of the bed, the school of Shammai say it is for the space of two weeks, the school of Hillell say one week; scholars go out to learn the law, without leave of their wives, thirty days, workmen one week;”

which vow, for such a limited time, they seem to allow of, without mutual consent; and herein they disagree with the rule the apostle gives; and who further observes, the end to be had in view by such a voluntary separation for a time,

*that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer*; not that this was necessary for the ordinary discharge of such service, as for private acts of devotion among themselves, and constant family prayer; but either when times of fasting and prayer on some emergent occasions were appointed by themselves, or by the church, or by the civil government on account of some extraordinary and momentous affairs; and this seems to be observed by the apostle, in agreement with the customs and rules of the Jewish



nation, which forbid the use of the bed, as on their great and annual fast, the day of atonement <sup>f98</sup>, so on their fasts appointed by the sanhedrim for obtaining of rain <sup>f99</sup>: the word “fasting” is omitted in the Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions, and so it is in the Alexandrian copy, two of Stephens’s; and others: the apostle adds,

*and come together again*; to the same bed, and the use of it, and that for this reason,

*that Satan tempt you not for your incontinence*; for not having the gift of continency, should they pretend to keep apart long: Satan, who knows the temperament and disposition of men and women, may tempt them not only to hatred of, and quarrels with one another, but to impure lusts and desires, to fornication, adultery, and all uncleanness; a very good reason why, though abstinence from the marriage bed for a short time, by the consent of both parties, for religious purposes, may be lawful, yet ought not to be continued; since Satan may hereby get an advantage over them, and draw them into the commission of scandalous enormities. The Jews have a notion of Satan’s being a tempter, and of his tempting men to various sins, which they should guard against, as idolatry, etc. So say they <sup>f100</sup>, “thou mayest not look after idolatry, according to (<sup>f1019</sup>Deuteronomy 4:19) and again, thou must take heed lest this be a cause of it to thee, *Ātwa tisy ḵ j Ḷw*, “and Satan tempt thee” to look after them, and do as they do:” and again <sup>f101</sup>, frequently should a man think

“upon the unity of the blessed God, lest there should be anything above or below, before him or behind him, or by him, and so, *wtysm ḵ j Ḷh*, “Satan tempt him”, and he come into heresy.”

**Ver. 6.** *But I speak this by permission*, etc.] Referring either to what he had said before, though not to all; not to (<sup>f410D</sup>1 Corinthians 7:2) that for the avoiding of fornication, every man should make use of his own wife, and every woman of her own husband; since this is not by permission, but by command, (<sup>f0124f</sup>Genesis 2:24) that carnal copulation should be between one man and one woman in a married state; nor to (<sup>f410B</sup>1 Corinthians 7:3,4) for that married persons ought to render due benevolence to, and not defraud each other, having a power over each other’s bodies, is a precept, and not a permission, (<sup>f0210</sup>Exodus 21:10) but to (<sup>f410E</sup>1 Corinthians 7:5) their parting for a time, and coming together again: it is not an absolute command of God that they should separate for a time, on account of fasting and prayer,

but if they thought fit to do so by agreement, they might; nor was there any positive precept for their coming together again directly, after such service was over. The apostle said this,

*not of commandment*; but, consulting their good, gives this advice, lest Satan should be busy with them, and draw them into sin; but if they had the gift of continence, they might continue apart longer; there was no precise time fixed by God, nor did the apostle pretend to fix any: or it may refer to what follows after, that he would have all men be as he was; though he laid no injunction, but left them to their liberty; unless it can be thought to regard marriage in general, and to be said in opposition to a Jewish notion, which makes marriage *hwxm*, a “command”;

“a man, they say <sup>f102</sup>, is bound to this command at seventeen years of age, and if he passes twenty and does not marry, he transgresses, and makes void an affirmative precept;”

but the apostle puts it as a matter of choice, and not of obligation.

**Ver. 7.** *For I would that all men were even as I myself*, etc.] The apostle speaks not of his state and condition, as married or unmarried, for it is not certain which he was; some think he had a wife, others not: it looks, however, as if he had not at this time, as appears from (~~4008~~-1 Corinthians 7:8) but be it which it will, it can hardly be thought he should wish all men to be in either state, either all married, or all unmarried; but he speaks of the gift of continency, which he had, as the following words show; and this he desires for all men, that they might not be in any danger from Satan’s temptations, and that they might be more fit for and intent upon the service of Christ. The Syriac version adds, *atwykdb* in “purity”, or “chastity”; which may be preserved in a marriage state, as well as in single life:

*but every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that*: all the gifts of nature and grace which men have, they have of God, and not of themselves; and every man has a gift proper to himself; no one man has all gifts, but some one, and some another; and with respect to the case in hand, one man has the gift of continency, another the gift of marriage; all cannot contain themselves, only to whom it is given: and all are not disposed to marriage; some are inclined to a single life, and some to a marriage state; and of those that are married, some can abstain from the use of the marriage bed longer than others, without being

in danger of being tempted by Satan for their incontinency; and such a disposition is desirable.

**Ver. 8.** *I say therefore to the unmarried and widows*, etc.] Not by way of command, but advice: by the “unmarried” he means, either such men who never were in a married state, or else such who had been married, but their wives were dead; which latter sense seems more agreeable, since they are joined with “widows”, who had lost their husbands:

*it is good for them if they abide*; unmarried, and do not change their condition any more; not that it was sinful to marry again, for he allows of it in the next verse, in case they have not the gift of continence; and therefore “good” here, is not opposed to evil, only signifies that it would be better for them, more expedient and profitable for them; they would be more free from the cares of life, have less trouble, and be more at leisure to serve the Lord; and which he knew by experience, and therefore, proposes himself as an example:

*even as I*; that is, as he was then; for at that time it seems certain that he had no wife; though whether he had had one, and she was now dead, or whether he had never been married, may be matter of dispute; the former seems most agreeable, since he proposes himself as an example to widowers and widows; and having known what a married and single state both were, was better able to give his judgment of both, and proper advice to such persons which must come with more force and strength, and a better grace, from such an one.

**Ver. 9.** *But if they cannot contain*, etc. Or “if they do not contain”, as the words may be rendered, and as almost all versions do render them; if they have not the gift of continency; if they are not willing, and do not think fit to contain, for none are to be compelled; if either therefore they want a will or power to contain, let them marry; it is not only lawful for them to marry, but it is right and best for them; hence it appears that second marriages are lawful, which were condemned by some of the ancients: for it is better to marry than to burn; or be burnt; not with material fire, as Judah ordered Tamar to be brought forth and burnt with, for whoredom; nor with hell fire, the just demerit of uncleanness; but with the fire of lust itself; and so the Syriac version reads it, “it is better to marry than to be burnt” *atgrb*, “with lust”; when persons not only find in them some lustful motions and desires, and a glowing heat of concupiscence; but are as it were all on fire

with the lusts of the flesh, and in great danger of being drawn into the commission of fornication, adultery, or other pollutions, and even unnatural lusts; it is much better to enter into a marriage state, though it may have its cares, inconveniences, and difficulties, than to be under temptations and inclinations to such defilements: so the Jews often express the lust of concupiscence by fire; they tell<sup>f103</sup> us a

“story of R. Amram, that he redeemed all the captives, men and women; and the women and the virgins dwelt in a chamber in his house alone; one time, Satan kindled in him, **hwath çà**, “the fire of lust”, and he set a ladder to go up to them, and when he came upon the steps of the ladder, he began to cry with a loud voice, **µrm[ yb arwn µrm[ yb arwn**, “fire in the house of Amram, fire in the house of Amram”: and the men came to quench the fire, and found nothing burning; for it was only his intention to cause to cease from him the fire of lust; and his thought ceased and his mind grew cool; and they asked him, why he mocked them? he replied, for this is a greater “fire” than all the fires in the world, for it is the fire of hell:”

This story is also told in the Talmud<sup>f104</sup>, with some little variation: so we read of one that is **[ r rxyb j yhl ta**, “inflamed”<sup>f105</sup>, or all on fire “with the corruption of nature”, who does not direct his heart to God: and such a man that finds his corruptions prevail over him, he ought to marry, they say<sup>f106</sup>, as a proper remedy against it:

“he whose mind is intent upon the law continually, and learns it as Ben Azzai, and cleaves to it all his days, and does not marry a wife, there is no iniquity in his hands, and that because his corruption does not prevail over him; but if his corruption prevails over him, **hça açyl byyj**, “he ought to marry a wife”.”

and that for the very reason the apostle here gives. The Ethiopic version reads, “it is better to marry than to commit fornication”; that and adultery both are expressed by fire and burning, with the Jews, as they prove from (~~2004~~ Hosea 7:4 ~~2186~~ Song of Solomon 8:6)<sup>f107</sup>

**Ver. 10.** *And unto the married I command*, etc.] To the unmarried and widows he spoke by permission, or only gave advice and counsel to remain unmarried, provided they could contain; but if not, it was advisable to

marry; but to persons already in a married state, what he has to say to them is by commandment, enjoining what they are under obligation to observe, not being at liberty to do as they will:

*yet not I, but the Lord*; not as if he took upon him the dominion over them, to make laws for them, and, in an imperious authoritative way, oblige them to obedience to them; no; what he was about to deliver, was not a law of his own enacting and obtruding, but what their Lord, their Creator, head, husband, and Redeemer, had ordered and enjoined; and this grave solemn way of speaking he makes use of, to excite their attention, command awe and reverence, make the greater impression upon their minds, and show the obligation they were under to regard what was said:

*let not the wife depart from her husband*; for the same law that obliges a man to cleave to his wife, obliges the wife to cleave to her husband, (<sup><0024></sup>Genesis 2:24) and those words of Christ, “what God hath joined together, let no man put asunder”, (<sup><006></sup>Matthew 19:6) regard the one as well as the other; and the rules he has given, forbidding divorces only in case of adultery, (<sup><009></sup>Matthew 5:32 19:9) are as binding upon the wife as upon the husband. The wife therefore should not depart from her husband upon every slight occasion; not on account of any quarrel, or disagreement that may arise between them; or for every instance of moroseness and inhumanity; or because of diseases and infirmities; nor even on the score of difference in religion which, by what follows, seems to be greatly the case in view. The apostle observes this, in opposition to some rules and customs which obtained among Jews and Gentiles, divorcing and separating from one another upon various accounts; not only husbands put away their wives, but wives also left their husbands: for women to put away, or leave their husbands, were not in former times allowed of among the Jews, but from other nations crept in among them; indeed if a man married one under age, and she did not like him for her husband, she might refuse him, and go away without a bill of divorce; the manner of refusal was, by saying before two witnesses, I do not like such an one for my husband, or I do not like the espousals, with which my mother or my brother espoused me, or in such like words; and sometimes a written form of refusal was given <sup>f108</sup>; but otherwise where marriage was consummated, such a departure of the wife was not allowed. Salome, the sister of Herod, is thought to be the first that introduced it, who sent a bill of divorce to Costobarus <sup>f109</sup> her husband; and in this she was followed by Herodias, the daughter of Aristobulus, who left her husband, and married Herod Antipas <sup>f110</sup>; and it seems certain, that this

practice prevailed in Christ's time, since not only such a case is supposed, (<sup><4102></sup>Mark 10:12) but a very flagrant instance is given in the woman of Samaria, (<sup><4048></sup>John 4:18) who had had five husbands, not in a lawful regular manner, one after another upon their respective deaths, but she had married them, and put them away one after another: and as for the Gentiles, the account the Jews <sup>f111</sup> give of them is, that though they had

“no divorces in form, they put away one another; R. Jochanan says, **wtçrgm wtça**, “a man's wife might put him away”, and give him the dowry:”

though, according to other accounts, they had divorces in form, which, when a man put away a woman, were called **γραμματα αποπομπης**, “letters of dismissal”; and when a woman left her husband, **απολειθεως γραμματα**, “letters of dereliction”, such as Hipparchia the wife of Alcibiades gave to him <sup>f112</sup>; and Justin Martyr <sup>f113</sup> gives us an instance of a Christian woman, who gave her husband what the Roman senate called a divorce.

**Ver. 11.** *But and if she depart*, etc.] This is said, not as allowing of such a departure, which only in case of fornication is lawful; but supposing it a fact, that a woman cannot be prevailed upon to stay with her husband, but actually forsakes him upon some difference arising between them,

*let her remain unmarried*: she ought not to marry another man; her departure does not make the marriage void; nor is it to be made void by any difference between them, either on religious or civil accounts, only in case of adultery; and therefore, if upon such separation she marries, she is guilty of adultery:

*or be reconciled to her husband*; which is rather to be chosen, than to remain separate, though unmarried; if she has given the offence, and is the cause of the separation, she ought to acknowledge it, and ask forgiveness of her husband, and return to him and live in peace with him; and if the fault is on his side, she ought to make use of all proper methods to convince him of it, bring him into good temper, forgive any injury done her, and live peaceably and comfortably together:

*and let not the husband put away his wife*; as the Jews were wont to do, upon every trifling occasion; See Gill on <sup><4151></sup>Matthew 5:31” See Gill on <sup><4152></sup>Matthew 5:32”

**Ver. 12.** *But to the rest speak I, not the Lord,* etc.] He had spoken before to married persons in general, and had delivered not his own sentiments barely, but the commandment of the Lord, that such should never separate from, or put away each other; in which he has respect to such as were upon equal foot in matters of religion, who were both of them believers in Christ; but now he speaks to the rest, to such as were unequally yoked, the one a believer, the other an unbeliever; and what he delivers on this head, concerning their living together, there being no express determination of this matter by the Lord himself, he under divine inspiration gives his sense of it; as that such marriages were valid, and that such persons ought to live together, and not separate on account of difference in religion: or the sense is, that as “to the rest” of the things they had wrote to him about, besides what he had given answer to already, he should speak to under divine illumination; though he had not an express law of Christ to point unto them, as the rule of their conduct: and particularly, whereas they had desired his judgment and advice upon this head, whether one who before conversion had married an unbeliever, ought to live with such an one, or whether it would not be advisable to leave, or put such away, to it he answers,

*if any brother hath a wife that believeth not;* that is, if any man who is now a brother, one called by the grace of God, and is in church fellowship, has a wife to whom he was married whilst in a state of unregeneracy and infidelity; who is as she was when he married her, entirely destitute of faith in Christ; not one that is weak in the faith, or only makes an outward profession, but that has no faith at all in Christ, nor in his Gospel, not so much as an historical one; who disbelieves, denies, and rejects, the truths of the Gospel:

*and she be pleased to dwell with him;* loves her husband, chooses to continue with him, notwithstanding their different sentiments of religion:

*let him not put her away;* infidelity is no reason for a divorce. The Gospel revelation does not dissolve the natural obligations men and women are in to one another. The Jews had a law prohibiting marriages with Heathens and idolaters; and such marriages were dissolved, and such wives put away, (<sup><2346></sup>Exodus 34:16 <sup><5003></sup>Ezra 10:3) but this was a law peculiar to that people, and was not obligatory on other nations, and especially has no place under the Gospel dispensation.

**Ver. 13.** *And the woman which hath an husband that believeth*, etc.] The apostle puts the case both ways, there being the same reason for one as for another; that if she that was a sister, who was partaker of the grace of God, and a member of the church, had a husband to whom she was married before her conversion; who was an unbeliever, had no faith in Christ, nor any notion of the Gospel, but an infidel to both:

*and if he be pleased to dwell with her*; loves her, and is willing to continue with her; neither puts her away from him, nor departs from her on account of her Christianity:

*let her not leave him*; but continue, and cohabit with him as man and wife; this is the advice the apostle gives, as agreeably to the light of nature and reason; as becoming the Gospel of Christ, and as what might serve to recommend it, and spread the knowledge of it.

**Ver. 14.** *For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife*, etc.] That is, “by the believing wife”; as the Vulgate Latin and Syriac versions read, and so it is read in some copies; and likewise in the next clause the same is read,

*by the believing husband*; this is a reason given by the apostle why they should live together. This cannot be understood of internal sanctification, which is never the case; an unbeliever cannot be sanctified by a believer in this sense, for such a sanctification is only by the Spirit of God; nor external sanctification, or an outward reformation, which though the unbelieving yoke fellow may sometimes be a means of, yet not always; and besides, the usefulness of one to another in such a relation, in a spiritual sense, urged as a reason for living together, in (407/6-1 1 Corinthians 7:16) nor merely of the holiness of marriage, as it is an institution of God, which is equally the same in unbelievers as believers, or between a believer and an unbeliever, as between two believers; but of the very act of marriage, which, in the language of the Jews, is expressed by being “sanctified”; instances almost without number might be given of the use of the word **çdq**, in this sense, out of the Misnic, Talmudic, and Rabbinic writings; take the following one instead of a thousand that might be produced <sup>f114</sup>.

“The man **çdqm**, “sanctifies”, or espouses a wife by himself, or by his messenger; the woman **çdqtm**, “is sanctified”, or espoused by herself, or by her messenger. The man **çdqm**, “sanctifies”, or



espouses his daughter, when she is a young woman, by himself or by his messenger; if anyone says to a woman, **yçdqth**, “be thou sanctified”, or espoused to me by this date (the fruit of the palm tree,) **yçdqth**, “be thou sanctified”, or espoused to me by this (any other thing); if there is anyone of these things the value of a farthing, **tçdwqm**, “she is sanctified”, or espoused, and if not she is not **tçdwqm**, “sanctified”, or “espoused”; if he says, by this, and by this, and by this, if there is the value of a farthing in them all, **tçdwqm**, “she is sanctified”, or espoused; but if not, she is not **tçdwqm**, “sanctified”, or espoused; if she eats one after another, she is not **tçdwqm**, “sanctified”, or espoused, unless there is one of them the value of a farthing;”

in which short passage, the word which is used to “sanctify”, or be “sanctified”, in the Hebrew language, is used to espouse, or be espoused no less than “ten” times. So the Jews <sup>f115</sup> interpret the word “sanctified”, in (~~8005~~ Job 1:5) he espoused to them wives; in the Misna, the oral law of the Jews, there is a whole treatise of **ˆyçwdyq** “sanctifications” <sup>f116</sup>, or espousals; and in the Gemara or Talmud <sup>f117</sup> is another, full of the disputes of the doctors on this subject. Maimonides has also written a treatise of women and wives <sup>f118</sup>, out of which might be produced almost innumerable instances in proof of the observation; and such as can read, and have leisure to read the said tracts, may satisfy themselves to their heart’s content. Let it be further observed; that the preposition **ev**, which is in most versions rendered “by”, should be rendered “in” or “to” or “unto”, as it is in the next verse, and in many other places; (see ~~4172~~ Matthew 17:12 ~~4093~~ Mark 9:13) (~~51023~~ Colossians 1:23 ~~5047~~ 1 Thessalonians 4:7 ~~6005~~ 2 Peter 1:5-7) if it be rendered in the former way, “in”, it denotes the near union which by marriage the man and woman are brought into; if in the latter, it designs the object to which the man or woman is espoused, and the true sense and even the right rendering of the passage is this: “for the unbelieving husband is espoused to the wife, and the unbelieving wife is espoused to the husband”; they are duly, rightly, and legally espoused to each other; and therefore ought not, notwithstanding their different sentiments of religion, to separate from one another; otherwise, if this is not the case, if they are not truly married to one another, this consequence must necessarily follow; that the children born in such a state of cohabitation, where the marriage is

not valid, must be spurious, and not legitimate, and which is the sense of the following words:

*else were your children unclean, but now are they holy*; that is, if the marriage contracted between them in their state of infidelity was not valid, and, since the conversion of one of them, can never be thought to be good; then the children begotten and born, either when both were infidels, or since one of them was converted, must be unlawfully begotten, be base born, and not a genuine legitimate offspring; and departure upon such a foot would be declaring to all the world that their children were illegitimate; which would have been a sad case indeed, and contains in it another reason why they ought to keep together; whereas, as the apostle has put it, the children are holy in the same sense as their parents are; that as they are sanctified, or lawfully espoused together, so the children born of them were in a civil and legal sense holy, that is, legitimate; wherefore to support the validity of their marriage, and for the credit of their children, it was absolutely necessary they should abide with one another. The learned Dr. Lightfoot says, that the words “unclean” and “holy” denote not children unlawfully begotten, and lawfully begotten; but Heathenism and Christianity; and thinks the apostle alludes to the distinction often made by the Jews, of the children of proselytes being born in “holiness”, or out of it, that is, either before they became proselytes or after; but it should be observed, that though the word “holiness” is used for Judaism, yet not for Christianity; and besides, the marriages of Heathens were not looked upon as marriages by the Jews, and particularly such mixed ones as of a Jew and Gentile, they were not to be reckoned marriages; for so they say<sup>f119</sup>,

“he that espouses a Gentile woman, or a servant, *^yçwdyq ^nya*, “they are not espousals”; but lo, he is after the espousals as he was before the espousals; and so a Gentile, or a servant, that espouses a daughter of Israel, *^yçwdyq ^hyçwdyq ^ya*, “those espousals are no espousals”;

nor do they allow children begotten of such persons to be legitimate. This learned writer himself owns such a tradition, and which he cites<sup>f120</sup>,

“that a son begotten in uncleanness is a son in all respects, and in general is reckoned as an Israelite, though he is a bastard, *wmb wnya hywgh ^m ^bh*, “but a son begotten on a Gentile woman is not his son”;

all which are just the reverse of what the apostle is here observing; and who, it must be remarked, is speaking of the same sort of holiness of children as of parents, which cannot be understood of Christianity, because one of the parents in each is supposed to be an Heathen. The sense I have given of this passage, is agreeable to the mind of several interpreters, ancient and modern, as Jerom, Ambrose, Erasmus, Camerarius, Musculus, etc. which last writer makes this ingenuous confession; formerly, says he, I have abused this place against the Anabaptists, thinking the meaning was, that the children were holy for the parents' faith; which though true, the present place makes nothing for the purpose: and I hope, that, upon reading this, everyone that has abused it to such a purpose will make the like acknowledgment; I am sure they ought.

**Ver. 15.** *But if the unbelieving depart*, etc.] If the unbelieving party, man or woman, separate themselves from the believing party on account of religion, and in hatred to it, and will not live with the believer unless Christ is denied, his Gospel abjured, and his ordinances and worship relinquished:

*let him depart*; he or she, though not without making use of all proper means to retain them; but if, after all, they will go, unless such things are complied with as are unreasonable and sinful, they are not to be held, but let go; and the deserted person may sit down contented, being not to be blamed, the fault entirely lying upon the deserter:

*a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases.* The Ethiopic version reads it, "to such an one"; one that is called by grace a church member, and so a brother or sister in Christ, is not to be subject to an unbeliever in matters of conscience, in things appertaining to the worship of God, and the service and glory of Christ; nor, being in such circumstances, that either Christ must be forsaken, or the unbeliever will depart, are they obliged to yield to such an one, but rather suffer a departure; nor are they bound to remain unmarried, but are free to marry another person, after all proper methods have been tried for a reconciliation, and that appears to be impracticable; desertion in such a case, and attended with such circumstances, is a breach of the marriage contract, and a dissolution of the bond, and the deserted person may lawfully marry again; otherwise a brother, or a sister in such a case, would be in subjection and bondage to such a person:

*but God hath called us to peace*; which ought to be sought after and maintained, so far as it can be consistent with truth, the glory of God, the

honour of Christ, and interest of religion. The believing party being threatened with a desertion, ought as much as possible to seek for peace and reconciliation, and do all that can be to prevent a departure; for saints are called by the grace of God, to follow after and cultivate peace, not only with one another in their Christian communion as saints, but with all men, even their enemies, and especially with such as are so nearly allied; wherefore the departure should not be easily admitted, or a new marriage be suddenly entered into, reconciliation, if it can be obtained, being most eligible and becoming a Christian.

**Ver. 16.** *For what knowest thou, O wife,* etc.] These words may be understood, as containing a reason either why the believing party should be easy at the departure of the unbeliever, after all proper methods have been used in vain to retain him or her; taken from the uncertainty and improbability of being of any use to them, to bring them to the knowledge of Christ, and salvation by him; “for what knowest thou, O wife”; thou dost not know, thou canst not know, thou canst not be sure,

*whether thou shall save thy husband?* be the means of bringing of him under the means of grace, and so of his conversion and salvation; there is no likelihood of it, since he is such an implacable enemy to Christ, and so bitterly averse to the Gospel, and the ordinances of it; and therefore since he is determined to separate, even let him go: or else, as rendering a reason why the believer should seek for peace and reconciliation, and by all means, if possible, continue to dwell with the unbeliever; taken from hopes of being serviceable under a divine influence and blessing, for their spiritual and eternal good, the wife for the good of the husband; by whose conversation he may be won over, and prevailed upon to entertain a better opinion of the Christian religion; to take a liking to the Gospel, and to attend upon the ministry of the word, which may be made the power of God unto salvation to him:

*or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shall save thy wife;* this may possibly be done, in the same manner as now suggested: persons in such a relation have often great influence upon one another, and are by divine Providence often great blessings to each other, in things spiritual as well as temporal. This puts me in mind of a case related by the Jewish doctors <sup>f121</sup>:

“it happened to a holy man that he married a holy woman, and they had no children; say they, we are of no manner of profit to the blessed God; they stood up and divorced one another; he went and

married a wicked woman, and she made him wicked; she went and married a wicked man, *qydx wtwa htç[w* “and she made him righteous”;

or, to use the apostle’s phrase, “saved him”.

**Ver. 17.** *But as God hath distributed to every man*, etc.] This text is so placed, and the words of it so expressed, as that it may have regard both to what goes before, and follows after; it may have respect to every man’s proper gift, whether of continence, or of disposition to marriage, which every man has of God, (~~1~~1 Corinthians 7:7), and accordingly ought to live in a single, or in a married state; or it may refer to the last verse,

*what knowest thou*, etc. and *εἰ μὴ*, which we render “but”, be translated either “unless”; and then the sense is, thou knowest not, O man or woman, whether thou shalt save thy wife or husband, nor any other, unless God, who distributes his, grace to everyone as he pleases; or else it may be rendered if “not”, and the sense be, if thou shouldst not save thy husband, or thou, man, shouldst not save thy wife; yet “as God hath distributed to every man” his own proper gift, both as to nature and grace; his proper sphere of usefulness, and the station in which he would have him be, and the place he would have him fill up, and the business he must do in life; so let him act, and

*as the Lord hath called everyone*; which is to be understood of that particular station of life, and those circumstances of it, in which men are providentially placed by God, or are found in when he calls them by his grace; as whether married or unmarried; whether joined to a believer or an unbeliever; whether circumcised or uncircumcised; whether bond or free; a servant or a master; and so may refer to what follows, as well as to what goes before:

*so let him walk*; contented with his station and kind of life, agreeably to the profession he makes of the Gospel, doing all the good he can to those he is concerned with:

*and so ordain I in all churches*; the decisions and determinations he had made, in the cases proposed to him about marriage, the rules and orders he had prescribed, what he had given out by way of precept or permission, by command or counsel, or what he was about to deliver, were no other than what he in common enjoined other churches; and therefore they ought not

to think that they were used with more strictness and severity than others; and might be induced hereby to attend to what was advised or enjoined, since it was what was common to all the churches.

**Ver. 18.** *Is any man called being circumcised?* etc.] That is, if any man that is a Jew, who has been circumcised in his infancy, is called by the grace of God, as there were many in those days, and many of them in the church at Corinth:

*let him not become uncircumcised;* or “draw on” the foreskin; as some did in the times of Antiochus, for fear of him, and to curry favour with him, who, it is said, 1 Maccab. 1:15, “made themselves uncircumcised”, and forsook the holy covenant; and so did Menelaus, and the sons of Tobias, as Josephus reports <sup>f122</sup>; and there were many, in the days of Ben Cozba, who became uncircumcised by force, *ʿykwçm*, they had their foreskins drawn on by the Gentiles against their wills, and when he came to reign were circumcised again <sup>f123</sup>; for, according to the Jews, circumcision must be repeated, and not only four or five times <sup>f124</sup>, but a hundred times, if a man becomes so often uncircumcised <sup>f125</sup>. They make mention of several particular persons who voluntarily became uncircumcised, or, to use their phrase, and which exactly answers to the word used by the apostle, *wtl r[b Æçwm* “that drew over his foreskin”; as Jehoiachin <sup>f126</sup>, Achan <sup>f127</sup>, yea even the first Adam <sup>f128</sup>; one guilty of this, they say, makes void the covenant <sup>f129</sup>; it was accounted a very great sin, so great that he that committed it was reckoned <sup>f130</sup> among them that shall have no part in the world to come, but shall be cut off and perish; physicians say, this may be done by the use of an instrument they call spaster, which has its name from the word used in the text. The apostle’s sense is, that such as had been circumcised, and had now embraced the faith of Christ, had no reason to be uneasy, or take any methods to remove this mark from their flesh, because it was abolished by Christ, and now of no significance; since as it did them no good, it did them no hurt:

*is any called in uncircumcision? let him not become circumcised?*; that is, if a Gentile who was never circumcised is called by grace, let him not submit to circumcision, which is now abrogated, and is altogether unnecessary and unprofitable in the business of salvation; yea, hurtful and pernicious if done on that account, since it makes men debtors to do the whole law, and Christ of none effect unto them.

**Ver. 19.** *Circumcision is nothing*, etc.] In the affair of justification before God, and acceptance with him; it cannot make any man righteous in the sight of God, nor recommend him to the divine favour; it is no evidence of a man's calling, or of his having the truth or grace of God in him; nor is it of any avail in the business of salvation. It was something formerly; it was a command and an ordinance of God, to Abraham and his natural seed; it pointed at the corruption and pollution of nature; was typical of the effusion of the blood of Christ, for pardon, and cleansing, and of the internal circumcision of the heart; it was a sign and seal to Abraham, that he should be the father of many nations, and that the righteousness of faith should come upon the uncircumcised Gentiles; and was a distinguishing character of the people of the Jews, until the Messiah came: but now it is nothing, nor has it any of these uses, being with the rest of the ceremonies abolished by Christ; it gives no preference to the Jew above the Gentile; he that has this mark in his flesh, is not a whit the better for it, and he that is without it, is not at all the worse; and is a reason why both the one and the other should be easy, and not attempt any alteration in themselves with regard to this, or think the better or worse of themselves on account of it. This is said in direct opposition to the sentiments of the Jews, who extol circumcision to the skies. The apostle says it is nothing, and they say it is everything, and everything is nothing without it; they say, it is the hinge of their whole law<sup>f131</sup>, and that it is equal to all the precepts in the law<sup>f132</sup>; their extravagant commendations of it take in the following passage<sup>f133</sup>;

“says R. Eliezar ben Azariah, uncircumcision is rejected, because by it the wicked are defiled, as it is said, “for all the Gentiles are uncircumcised”; says R. Ishmael, *hl ym hl wdg*, “great is circumcision”; for on account of it, thirteen covenants were made; says R. Jose, “great is circumcision”, for it drives away the sabbath, the weighty (command in the law, that is, it is obliged to give way to it); R. Joshua ben Korcha says, “great is circumcision”, for it was not suspended to Moses the righteous one full hour; R. Nehemiah says, “great is circumcision”, for it drives away plagues; says Rabba, “great is circumcision”, for notwithstanding all the commands which Abraham our father did, he was not called perfect until he was circumcised; as it is said, “walk before me, and be thou perfect”; says another, “great is circumcision”, for had it not been for that, the holy blessed God would not have created his world; as it is said, “thus saith the Lord, if my covenant be not with day and

night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth”,”

More of this kind might be produced, but enough of this.

*And uncircumcision is nothing*; it does not hinder any having an interest in, and partaking of the blessings of grace; nor their enjoyment of the Gospel and Gospel ordinances; nor their communion and fellowship with the churches of Christ, much less their everlasting salvation, as say <sup>f134</sup> the Jews;

“the holy blessed God (say they) rejects the uncircumcised, and brings them down to hell; as it is said, (<sup><3708</sup>Ezekiel 32:18) “son of man, wail for the multitude of Egypt, and cast them down”; and so says Isaiah, (<sup><2354</sup>Isaiah 5:14) “therefore hell hath enlarged herself and opened her mouth”, **qj yl bl** ; that is, to him that hath not the law of circumcision; as it is said, (<sup><1950</sup>Psalm 105:10) “and confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant”; for no circumcised persons go down to hell:”

*but the keeping of the commandments of God*; that is something; not that the commands of God, and the observance of them, are of any avail to procure the pardon of sin, acceptance with God, justification in his sight, and eternal salvation; yet they are of moment, as they are the commands and ordinances of God; and ought to be kept in faith and fear, as they were delivered from a principle of love, and with a view to the glory of God; and though for keeping of them there is no reward of debt, yet in keeping of them there is a reward of grace; peace of mind is had, and the presence of God enjoyed; obedience to them, upon Gospel principles and motives, is a fruit of grace, an evidence of faith, and of the new creature; it is the ornament of a Christian profession, and is profitable to men.

**Ver. 20.** *Let every man abide in the same calling*, etc.] Civil calling, station, and business of life,

*wherein he was called*; that is, in which he was when he was called by the grace of God; and is to be understood of such a calling, station, and business of life, as is lawful, honest, and of good report; otherwise he ought not to abide in it, but betake himself to another, as Matthew and Zacchaeus, when called by grace, left the scandalous employment of a



publican: nor is it the apostle's sense, that a man that is in an honest way of living, may not change that for another that is equally so, as if a man was bound down to that sort of business he is in when first called; for no doubt it may be lawful, and there may be just reason for it in Providence, why a man should change his calling and station in life; though this ought not to be done rashly and unadvisedly, and without wise and good reasons; but the chief view of the apostle is to teach contentment in every condition, and station of life, and that persons should not be uneasy and restless in it, and seek for an alteration when there is no just occasion; and particularly he seems to have reference, either to the different state of married and unmarried persons, he had before been speaking of; (see ~~4177~~ 1 Corinthians 7:27) or to the different circumstances of Jew and Gentile, as circumcised or uncircumcised, as in the foregoing verse; or to the different condition of bond and free, servant and master, in the following verse; and persuades them to remain easy and satisfied, for that the Christian religion does not necessarily require a change in a man's civil circumstances of life.

**Ver. 21.** *Art thou called being a servant?* etc.] That is, called by grace whilst in the condition of a servant,

*care not for it;* do not be troubled at it, and uneasy with it; be not anxiously solicitous to be otherwise; bear the yoke patiently, go through thy servitude cheerfully, and serve thy master faithfully; do not look upon it as any objection to thy calling, any contradiction to thy Christian liberty, or as unworthy of, and a reproach upon thy profession of Christ:

*but if thou mayest be made free,* use it rather. The Syriac renders the last clause, *j wl ptd Æl ybg*, "choose for thyself to serve"; perfectly agreeable to the sense given of the words, by several great critics and excellent interpreters, who take the apostle's meaning to be, that should a Christian servant have an opportunity of making his escape from his master, or could he by any art, trick, and fraudulent method, obtain his liberty, it would be much more advisable to continue a servant, than to become free by any such means: yea, some seem to carry the sense so far, that even if servants could be made free in a lawful way, yet servitude was most eligible, both for their own and their master's good: for their own to keep them humble and exercise their patience; for their master's not only temporal, but spiritual good; since by their good behaviour they might be a means of recommending the Gospel to them, and of gaining them to Christ; but one should rather think the more obvious sense is, that when a

Christian servant has his freedom offered him by his master, or he can come at it in a lawful and honourable way, this being preferable to servitude, he ought rather to make use of it; since he would be in a better situation, and more at leisure to serve Christ, and the interest of religion: however, certain it is, that the apostle's design is, to make men easy in every station of life, and to teach them how to behave therein; he would not have the freeman abuse his liberty, or be elated with it, nor the servant be uneasy under his servitude, nor be depressed by it, for the reasons following.

**Ver. 22.** *For he that is called in the Lord*, etc.] Which is to be understood, not of any civil calling, or of calling to an office; or of the outward call by the ministry of the word only; but of an internal, special, powerful, evangelical, and saving call by the grace of God; which is of persons out of darkness into light, out of bondage into liberty, from their sinful companions to the company and society of Christ and his people, from off themselves and their own righteousness, to the grace and righteousness of Christ, and out of the world unto a kingdom and glory. And this may be said to be, in the Lord; either because it is by him, he is the efficient cause of it, his grace the moving cause, and his glory the end; or because it is in consequence of being in him, united to him, persons are first in the Lord, and then called by him; or because they are called into fellowship and communion with him; the whole is true, and make up the sense of the text; for he that is effectually called by grace, is called by the Lord, and by virtue of being chosen in him, and in union to him, and to partake of all the blessings of grace and glory that are with him. And such an one,

*being a servant*; in a natural and civil sense when called, in a spiritual sense

*is the Lord's freeman*; he is free from sin, not from the being, but from the servitude, guilt, and damning power of it: he is free from Satan, not from his temptations and insults, but from his dominion and captivity; he is ransomed from him, by the redemption of Christ, and is turned from his power in conversion; he has not that influence over him he before had; and he is so safe and secure from him, that he can never be destroyed by him, and in a short time Satan will be bruised under his feet: he is free from the law, the observance of the ceremonial law, and all its numerous burdensome rites; and from the moral law, not from obedience to it, as in the hands of Christ, but from the bondage, curse, and condemnation of it, as ministered by Moses: he is free of the company of saints, of the church

of God below, and of heaven, the city God has built and prepared for his; he is free to the use of all things indifferent, provided it is done in faith, the peace of weak brethren secured, and the glory of God preserved; he is free to all the privileges and immunities of the house of God, and to the throne of grace, come when he will; and therefore though a servant, in another sense he is a very happy man; he is free indeed, and can never be disenfranchised, or arrested, or cast into prison; the various privileges he is free unto and enjoys, show him to be a happy man; and the effects following on his freedom prove it, as peace with God, the presence of Christ, joy in the Holy Ghost, fellowship with saints, and a well grounded hope of glory; he is not only called to the liberty of grace, which he enjoys, but will be delivered into the glorious liberty of the children of God; and therefore has no reason to be uneasy with his civil servitude: on the other hand,

*likewise he that is called being free;* he that is called by the grace of God, with an holy and effectual calling, being a freeman, his own master, and it may be the master of others in a civil sense, he, in a spiritual one,

*is Christ's servant:* he is bought by Christ with his money, with the price of his blood; and therefore he has a right unto him, and a claim to his service; and he becomes a voluntary servant to him, through the power of his grace upon him; and though he serves his Lord Christ without mercenary views, freely, readily, and cheerfully, from a principle of love and gratitude, he shall not fail of a reward of grace; he shall be honoured of God, approved of men, and shall receive the reward of the inheritance: Christian liberty, and the service of Christ, are not at all inconsistent; nor should we entertain any other notions of liberty, but what are consistent with serving the Lord; whatever liberty contradicts, that is no true liberty; though it may have the face of it, it is no other than bondage.

**Ver. 23.** *Ye are bought with a price,* etc.] Some read these words interrogatively, as (<sup>417B</sup>1 Corinthians 7:18,21), “are ye bought with a price?” and suppose them directed to such who had bought out their time of servitude with a sum of money, and ought not to return to their former condition; but they are rather to be read affirmatively, and to be understood of all, whether freemen or servants, that are bought with the inestimable price of Christ's blood, as in (<sup>415D</sup>1 Corinthians 6:20) and contain in them a reason why such as are called by the grace of God, whilst in a state of civil servitude, are Christ's freemen, because they are redeemed by him from

sin, Satan, the law, and from among men; and also why such as are called by the grace of God, being in a state of civil liberty, are Christ's servants, because he has purchased them with his blood, and therefore has a right unto them, both to their persons and service:

*be not ye the servants of men:* not that the apostle dissuades such as are redeemed by Christ, and are believers in him, from being the servants of men in a civil sense; for this would be to contradict himself, who here and elsewhere exhorts servants to continue in the service of their masters, and to perform it heartily and cheerfully, and with great sincerity and integrity; but his meaning is, that since they were redeemed from a vain conversation by the blood of Christ, they should not be servants to the lusts of men, nor obey them in things sinful and wicked, which were contrary to law and Gospel, and which were made unlawful by the word of God, and were a breach of the command of their Lord and master Christ; nor should they in matters of religion and the worship of God submit to the authority of any set of men whatever, or be subject to the doctrines and commandments of men; whether these relate to Jewish ceremonies, or Gentile superstitions, or be a mixture of both: they were to call no man master upon earth; nor suffer any to lord it over them, as the false teachers very much did in this church; but to acknowledge Christ, who had bought them to be their only Lord and master. The allusion seems to be to a tradition of the Jews, that the Israelites being redeemed out of Egypt were the servants of God, and not of men <sup>f135</sup>;

“R. Jochanan ben Zaccai was explaining this Scripture, (<sup><0206></sup>Exodus 21:6) how different the ear is from all the members of the body; says the holy blessed God, the ear that heard my voice on Mount Sinai, at the time I said, the children of Israel are my servants, **μydb[ I μydb[ al w**, and “not servants to servants”; and this goes and gets itself a master, let it be bored: R. Simeon ben Ribbi was explaining the same Scripture, how different the door and the door post were from all the parts of the house; says the holy blessed God, the door and the door post, which were witnesses in Egypt, at the time that I passed by the threshold, and by the two door posts, and I said, the children of Israel are my servants, and not servants to servants, and I brought them out of bondage to liberty; and this goes and gets itself a master, let it be bored before them.”

**Ver. 24.** *Brethren, let every man wherein he is called,* The apostle repeats the advice given in (1 Corinthians 7:20) and prefaces it with that tender and affectionate appellation, “brethren”, the more to engage them to attend to it; showing also that whatever difference there was in their civil state and condition, there was none in their religious one; they were all brethren, one of another, they were his brethren, yea, even the brethren of Christ:

*therein abide with God;* that is, abide in his civil calling and station of life, be it what it will, as knowing he is in that state it is the will of God he should be in; and as in the sight of God, who knows all men, and what is best for them, and who sees and observes all their actions and conduct of life; and with whom there is no respect of persons, of bond or free, of masters or servants; they are admitted equally to enjoy the same favours and privileges in the house of God; have the same access to the throne of grace, and enjoy the same communion with God; and therefore should be content in their present situation, discharging the several duties of their station aright, and exercise a good conscience both towards God and man.

**Ver. 25.** *Now concerning virgins,* etc.] Whether they should continue in the same state or not, whether they should marry or not, was one of the cases put to the apostle, and which the Corinthians wrote to him about, and to which he returns this answer:

*I have no commandment of the Lord:* neither in the Old Testament, in the law of Moses, or writings of the prophets; nothing is therein enjoined concerning celibacy, or commanding persons to live a single life; but on the contrary there are many things directing and exciting to a marriage state; nor had the apostle any command from the Lord Jesus Christ, under the Gospel dispensation, obliging to virginity; nor any special orders, or peculiar revelation from the Spirit of God, fixing and settling this point:

*yet I give my judgment,* what will be most advisable, convenient, and prudent to be done, considering persons, times, and circumstances. The apostle does not make use of his power and authority, as such, to make decrees, and prescribe rules, binding on the consciences of men; only humbly and modestly gives his opinion, which if thought well of, might be followed by them: and the more to engage them to take his advice, he adds,

*as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful;* the meaning of which is, not that he, through the goodness and mercy of the Lord, had

with great integrity preserved his virginity, and so proposes himself, as an instance and example of retaining it; for it is not certain, that though the apostle was now single, that he had never been married; it seems rather that he had, and therefore this cannot be his sense; nor does he refer to his faithfulness, to the Gospel committed to his trust, and the faithful discharge of his whole ministerial service, and which was owing to divine grace and mercy; but to that plainness, honesty, and integrity, which appeared in the whole course and conduct of his life, and in all his conversation with men; and particularly in giving advice about any matter, or declaring his sentiments on any subject: and when a man is free and faithful, and openly and honestly tells his mind, it greatly recommends him, and commands attention and regard to what he says; and faithfulness, it may be observed, considered in this sense, is not of nature, but of grace; it is obtained not by a man's own power and strength, but by the grace and mercy of God; to which it is here ascribed.

**Ver. 26.** *I suppose, therefore, that this is good*, etc.] The opinion of the apostle, the sentiment of his mind, his judgment in this case were, that it was better, more advisable and eligible, for persons that were single to continue so; his reason for it follows,

*for the present necessity*; by which is meant not the shortness of life, and the necessity of dying, when husband and wife must part, upon which trouble ensues; nor the various sorrows, cares, encumbrances, trials, and exercises that attend a conjugal state, as bearing and bringing forth, and bringing up children, provision for the family, etc. which are common to all, and at all times more or less; but the present time of persecution, under which the churches of Christ were; agreeably the Syriac version reads it, **anbzd aq[a l j m**, “because of the necessity of the time”, or season: using the very Greek word in text; as the Targumists<sup>f136</sup> also have frequently adopted it into their language, and use the phrase **yq[a t [ç**, “an hour, or time of necessity”, for a time of great affliction and distress, just as the apostle does here; because this was the present case of the Christians, he thought it most prudent for such as were single to remain so; since as they were often obliged to move from place to place, to fly from one city to another, this would be very incommodious for married persons, who might have young children to take care of, and provide for; (see <sup>4149</sup>Matthew 24:19 <sup>4239</sup>Luke 23:29) upon a like account, the Jewish doctors advise to the same the apostle here does<sup>f137</sup>;

“from the day that the empire is extended, which decrees hard decrees upon us, and causes the law and the commandments to cease from us, and does not suffer us to circumcise children; it is right that we agree among ourselves, *hça açyl al ç*, not to marry, and beget children:”

*I say it is good for a man so to be*; to remain unmarried, to live a single life, to be a virgin; for the word “virgin”, as here used, relates to men as well as maidens, and denotes the single state of either. The apostle does not add, “even as I”; as he does in (~~408~~1 Corinthians 7:8) which seems to confirm the conjecture already made, that he was not a bachelor, but a widower; otherwise he would doubtless have enforced this advice by his own example, as before.

**Ver. 27.** *Art thou bound unto a wife?* etc.] Or to a woman; either by promise, or by espousal, or by consummate marriage; either of which is a tic, or obligation, a bond, and especially the latter; marriage is such a bond as cannot be dissolved, but by the death of one of the parties; (see ~~408~~Romans 7:2) unless in case of adultery, or of wilful desertion: and it is a bond which mutually obliges; as the husband is bound by the law of marriage to live chastely and lovingly with his wife, and to take care of her, and provide for her; so the wife is bound by the same law to live in like manner with her husband, and to submit unto him, and obey him:

*seek not to be loosed*; do not depart from her, nor seek to be divorced, nor even desire to be loosed by death:

*art thou loosed from a wife?* being either never married, or else if having been married the wife is dead, or legally divorced for a just cause:

*seek not a wife*, or woman; make no inquiry after one; be content to live without one; enter not into a marriage state, nor take any step towards it; it is best to continue loosed, for the reason above given, that is, provided the person has the gift of continence, otherwise not; (see ~~408~~1 Corinthians 7:5).

**Ver. 28.** *But and if thou marry, thou sinnest not*, etc.] If a man that has never been married, or one that has, if legally loosed from his wife, thinks fit to marry, he commits no sin, he breaks no law of God, far from it; marriage is honourable in all. The apostle would be understood, that in the advice he before gives, he is not dissuading from marriage, as a thing sinful

and criminal; only that it was more advisable to such as could to abstain from it, under the present circumstances of things; and what he says of a man holds equally true of a virgin:

*and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned*; the one may as lawfully marry as another; there is no law forbidding virgins to marry, any more than young men; and if they think fit to enter into such a state, they break no law of God, and consequently sin not:

*nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh*; that is, such young men and virgins, who choose to marry, and who generally promise themselves a great deal of pleasure, shall meet with a great deal of trouble; and that even where they expected the most satisfaction and delight, “in the flesh”; the body, the outward man, and external circumstances of life. This “trouble” is the same with the present necessity before mentioned, the persecutions and tribulations the saints should suffer in the flesh, for the sake of Christ and his Gospel; not that married persons should be the only ones that should have trouble in this way, but that such persons would be less able to bear it, or to escape from it. Moreover, this may be extended to all the sorrows, troubles, and distresses which attend a married state:

*but I spare you*; the sense of which is, either that the apostle, out of his great tenderness to such who were inclined to marry, and could not contain, just gave this hint, that such should have trouble in the flesh; but did not dwell upon it or enter into particulars, lest they should be discouraged from it, and fall into temptation, sin, and a snare; or because of the great respect he had to the Corinthians, he gave the above advice to keep themselves single, that they might the better bear afflictions and persecutions, for the sake of their profession, and escape many troubles which others endure.

**Ver. 29.** *But this I say, brethren, the time is short*, etc.] This is another reason, with which the apostle supports his advice to virgins, and unmarried persons, to remain so; since the time of life is so very short, and it is even but a little while to the end of the world, and second coming of Christ; and therefore seeing the marriage state is so full of care and trouble, and it affords still less time for the service of Christ and religion, he thought it most advisable for them to, continue in a single life, that they might be more at leisure to make use of that little time they had for their spiritual good and welfare, the edification of others, and the glory of Christ: unless it should be rather thought that the apostle is still enlarging



upon the former argument, taken from the present time, being a time of distress and persecution; and so the phrase, “the time is short”, or “contracted”, and full of anguish and affliction, is the same with the present necessity, and trouble in the flesh; and since this was the case, he suggests again, that an unmarried state was most preferable:

*it remaineth that both they that have wives*, be as though they had none: and as for the rest, they that were married, his advice to them was, that they should so behave as if they were not married; not that he would have them put away their wives, or fancy with themselves that they had none, or make no use of the marriage bed; but suggests a moderate use of it; he would not have them give up themselves to lasciviousness and carnal lusts and pleasures, even with their own wives, and spend their time altogether in their company and embraces: but since the time of life was short, and that full of troubles, they should spend it in the service and worship of God, private and public, as much as possible; and not in the indulging and satisfying of the flesh.

**Ver. 30.** *And they that weep, as though they wept not*, etc.] They that weep for troubles and crosses, things adverse and afflicting in a marriage state, for the loss of wives or children, should express their sorrow in such a manner and degree, as if they wept not; not that the apostle here introduces and establishes a stoical apathy, and would have persons show no manner of concern for these things; but he directs to a moderate use of sorrow, to such a degree as not to hinder and divert from the exercises of piety and religion:

*and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not*; such who are blessed with great prosperity, and with whom everything goes well; they have married wives, and have children, and thrive in the world; let them rejoice on the account of these things, in such a still, silent way, as if they rejoiced not, their hearts not being set upon their outward felicity, nor elated with it; but rejoicing rather that their names were written in heaven, that they had an interest in Christ and his grace, and a right and title to the glories of another world, and at the same time be thankful to God for what they enjoy in this:

*and they that buy as though they possessed not*; meaning, not any sort of buyers, everyone is a buyer in some sense; but such as purchase estates, buy houses and lands, and become proprietors of large tracts. These the apostle would not have hold their substance for themselves, but hold it as if

they did not hold it, parting with it for the use of others; and as persons that are only stewards, and not properly owners, and in a little time must quit it all, and be accountable for their use and disposition of it.

**Ver. 31.** *And they that use this world, as not abusing it,* etc.] Such as have a large affluence of the things of this world, should use them in a moderate and temperate manner; should not squander them away extravagantly, or spend them on their lusts, and use them intemperately, which is to abuse them:

*for the fashion of this world passeth away;* not the nature, matter, and substance, but the figure and form of it; for after this world is burnt up, a new one, as to form and fashion, will arise, in much more beauty and glory; all that looks glorious and beautiful in the present world, as riches, honour, etc. are all mere show and appearance, having nothing solid and substantial in them; and are all fluid and transitory, are passing away; there is nothing firm and permanent; in a little time, all will be at an end, the world itself, as to its present form, and all that is in it; when there will be no more marrying, nor giving in marriage, no more buying and selling, no more of the present changes and vicissitudes of prosperity and adversity, of joy and sorrow; these scenes will be all removed, and quite a new face of things appear: wherefore what the apostle exhorts unto, with respect to present conduct and behaviour, must be right and good.

**Ver. 32.** *But I would have you without carefulness,* etc.] This is another reason, by which the apostle confirms the advice he gives to virgins to remain such, because the married state is full of cares, whereas the single life is no more free from them; and therefore he wishes them to continue in such a state, that they might be without anxious and distracting cares of temporal things, things relating to the good decorum and sustenance of a family, and so be more free and at leisure for the service of God; which he illustrates, by showing the different cares that married and unmarried persons are involved in:

*he that is unmarried, careth for the things that belong to the Lord;* such as hearing the word, reading it, meditating upon it, praying to God and attending upon all ordinances, taking every opportunity to glorify God, and do good to others; but this is not to be understood as matter of fact, that unmarried persons are so studiously concerned for these things, or that this is the case of all of them; there are many unmarried persons think nothing about them; and are not at all concerned with them; but the meaning is,

that such persons are more at leisure, and can more conveniently attend to these things, and ought so to do; and they that have the grace of God will be more or less solicitous to observe them:

*how he may please the Lord*; for when these things are attended to in faith and fear, from a principle of love, and with a view to the glory of God, the good of their own souls and others, they are well pleasing to the Lord; and though they are not meritorious of eternal life, yet they are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, and will be taken notice of with approbation, and followed with a reward of grace another day.

**Ver. 33.** *But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world,* etc.] Attending diligently to the business and calling of life, he is engaged in, that he may provide food and clothing, and other necessaries for the support and sustenance of his family:

*how he may please his wife*: and make her and his children easy and comfortable. This also is not to be understood of every individual person in a married state as matter of fact; for, on the one hand, there are some who take no care to please their wives and provide for their families, and are worse than infidels; and, on the other hand, there are others who take a proper care to make a suitable provision for their wives and children, to the satisfaction of both; and yet this is not their only care, they also care for the things of the Lord, and concern themselves much for his honour and glory: but the sense is, that, generally speaking, persons in such a state are greatly involved in worldly cares, and have not that leisure, and those opportunities, that single persons have to attend religious exercises; wherefore the single state, on this account, is, in the apostle's opinion, the more preferable.

**Ver. 34.** *There is difference also between a wife and a virgin,* etc.] The word *μεμερισται*, translated “there is difference”, stands in some copies at the end of the last verse, and in the Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions, by which it is rendered, “and is divided”; referring to the married man, whose thoughts are distracted with the cares of the world, and his mind divided between the Lord and his wife, between the things that please the one, and those that please the other; so that he cannot attend upon the Lord without distraction, as the unmarried person may; (see ~~4175~~ 1 Corinthians 7:35). But the more generally received reading is what we follow; in which words the apostle shows, that there is just the same difference between a married and an unmarried woman, as there is between

a married and an unmarried man. There is no difference in their nature, nor sex, but in their state and condition, and in the cares which involve the one and the other.

*The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord;* not everyone that is unmarried, but one that has the grace of God, being in a single state; as such an one is more at leisure, and can more conveniently attend on the service of the Lord, so she ought, and generally speaking does: and her end in so doing is,

*that she may be holy both in body and in spirit;* not in body only, but in spirit also; for outward chastity, without internal holiness, will be of little avail: but as a close adherence to the Lord, and to his worship and service, may be a means of preserving from external pollutions of the body, so likewise of carrying on the internal work of grace upon the soul; not that it is to be thought that unmarried persons are the only ones that are holy in body and spirit; there are some that are so in neither; and there are many married persons that are chaste in their bodies, and possess their vessels in sanctification and honour, and are blessed with inward spiritual purity.

*But she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband;* not by beautifying and adorning herself with brodered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; though this is all that some care for; but with good works, taking care of her household and family affairs, bringing up her children in an orderly manner, honouring and obeying her husband, doing everything to oblige him, and to engage his love and affection to her, as becomes her; nor is this said of her by way of criticism, only that such is her state and situation in life, that she has not the opportunities and advantages the unmarried person has of serving the Lord; on which account the single life is represented as most advisable to abide in.

**Ver. 35.** *And this I speak for your own profit,* etc.] The apostle suggests, that in giving the advice he did to unmarried persons to abide single, he had nothing else in view than their temporal and spiritual advantage; that they might be better able to meet and grapple with persecution for the sake of the Gospel; that they might be more free from the cares and encumbrances of life, and more at liberty to serve the Lord; whereby not only his glory, but their spiritual good, might be promoted; not that he thought that marriage was unlawful, or that the single life was a more honest, and a more chaste way of living, or that it was absolutely necessary, and an

incumbent duty upon them to remain single, nor would he be so understood: all that he had said was by way of advice; he had very faithfully laid before them the advantages and disadvantages of both states, and now leaves them to their full liberty to do as they pleased to take his advice, or not:

*not that I may cast a snare on you*; as fowlers on birds: had he enjoined virginity as necessary, and insisted upon it, that it was absolutely their duty to live a single life; this would have been laying an obligation upon them, and an ensnaring and entangling of them: hereby some might have engaged in a single life, who had not the gift of continence, and so might have been drawn into the sin of fornication, or into unnatural lust, and such impurities as would be very scandalous unto, and highly reflect upon, the Gospel of Christ. But the apostle delivered himself on the subject with no such view, and in such a manner as is plain he meant not to ensnare any:

*but for that which is comely, and that you may attend upon the Lord without distraction*: all he aimed at, by advising them to a single life, was that they might more orderly and constantly, and without distraction of mind, through the cares of the world, wait upon the Lord, and serve him; which, in his opinion, was choosing the good part with Mary; whilst others, like Martha, were troubled, divided, and distracted with many things.

**Ver. 36.** *But if any man think*, etc.] This some understand of a man that is engaged, or betrothed to a virgin, and protracts marriage, who may use his prudence in consummating it, if he pleases, for any thing the apostle has said to the contrary: but it is better to understand it of a parent, or one that has the care and guardianship of virgins; if such an one is of opinion,

*that he behaveth himself uncomely towards his virgin*: by exposing her to contempt and reproach, in retaining her at home, and not giving her in marriage when at proper age for such a state; it being reckoned reproachful to be at, or past the age of marriage, or to be in years, and not married; or by so doing lay her under temptation to do that which is uncomely, to commit fornication, which would be uncomely, both to him, and to her; and such a tendency has living in a single state, contrary to inclination. The apostle may have respect to a Jewish tradition founded upon the supposed sense of (~~(819)~~ Leviticus 19:29) “do not prostitute thy daughter to cause her to be a whore”<sup>f138</sup>.

“Says R. Eliezer, this is he who marries his daughter to an old man. Says R. Akiba, (who was contemporary with the apostle,) this is he who detains his daughter at home when she is marriageable.”

*If she pass the flower of her age*; that is, one that is arrived to years of maturity, is ripe for marriage, and is what the Jewish doctors call **trgb**; who, according to them, was one of twelve years and a half old <sup>f139</sup>, at which age virgins were judged fit to marry: hence that saying of theirs <sup>f140</sup>

“if thy daughter, **hrgb**, “is ripe”, or come to the flower of her age, make thy servant free and give her to him.”

Moreover, according to their canons, such an one was no longer under her father’s power; for so runs the canon <sup>f141</sup>,

“**hrgbç`wyk** “when she is at the flower of her age”, she is no more under her father’s power:”

her father cannot make void her vows, though a husband can <sup>f142</sup>:

*and need so require*: that she be given in marriage to a man; if she has not the gift of continence; if she is in danger of falling into the sin of fornication, and the father or guardian are sensible of this:

*let him do what he will, he sinneth not*; he is under no obligation by what the apostle had said to detain her in a single life; he may give her in marriage if he pleases: he may

*do what she will*, as it may be rendered; comply with her inclination and desire in marrying her to some person; in doing which, neither he nor she will break any law of God, and so not sin therein:

*let them marry*; let parents marry their children when this is the case; let the young men and young women marry who are so disposed; there is no reason why they should not; there is nothing contrary to it in the word of God, nor in the advice of the apostle; nay, according to him, it was much better to marry than to burn, or to be exposed to any snare and temptation.

**Ver. 37.** *Nevertheless, he that standeth steadfast in his heart*, etc.] The apostle returns to confirm his former advice, where it can be attended to with safety; and observes, that notwithstanding what he had allowed might lawfully be done, and was proper to be done; yet a man that had deliberated upon, and had well weighed the matter of virginity, the case of

a single life, and was at a point about in, having no hesitation nor fluctuation of mind concerning it: and also “having no necessity”; of acting otherwise, either through the meanness of his circumstances, or rather through the weakness of his virgin, she not having the gift of continency:

*but hath power over his own will*; his daughter’s will being the same with his, and she entirely consenting to live a single life; otherwise he would have no power of acting as he pleased in such a case:

*and hath so decreed in his heart*: it is a fixed point on mature deliberation, in which he himself is hearty and determined, and his child perfectly assents to it, so that on all hands it is an agreed matter:

*that he will keep his virgin*; at home with him, unmarried, and not give her to any man in marriage:

*doth well*: or that which is for both temporal and spiritual profit and advantage, as before observed. Some understand all this of a man’s keeping his own virginity, and determining to continue unmarried.

**Ver. 38.** *So then he that giveth [her] in marriage doth well*, etc.] Does that which is in its own nature good; that which is agreeable to the will of God, is of his institution and appointment, and therefore must be good, and answer many good ends and purposes. Such an one that marries his daughter, he seeing a necessity for it, and a propriety in it, does a very good thing; secures her chastity, and his own credit; prevents fornication, and other evils that might follow; consults the good of mankind, and the honour of religion.

*But he that giveth [her] not in marriage doth better*; not a better action in itself, simply considered; but more profitable and advantageous under such and such circumstances, with such and such conditions and consequences; since hereby a single person is more fit to encounter with and endure persecutions, is freer from the cares of life, and more at liberty to wait upon the Lord, and give up himself to his service.

**Ver. 39.** *The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth*, etc.] That is, she is bound to her husband, by the law of marriage, during his life; nor can the bond of marriage between them be dissolved but by the death of one of them, except in the cases of adultery, and wilful desertion, (see ~~ROM~~ Romans 7:2,3).

*But if her husband be dead*; or “asleep”, for so the word may be rendered; though it designs death: death is often expressed by sleeping in Scripture; for the dead will not always remain in such a state, but be raised from thence at the last day, just as persons are awaked out of sleep. The Alexandrian copy reads *αποψαυη*, “dead”; and so seems the Ethiopic version to have read.

*She is at liberty to marry whom she will*: so that second marriages are lawful, though condemned by many of the ancients: the liberty of a widow is greater than that of a virgin, because a virgin is under the power, and at the dispose of her parents; but a widow is at her own dispose; and death having dissolved her former obligation, she is at entire liberty to marry, or not marry, and to marry whom she pleases, that is not forbidden by the laws of God:

*only in the Lord*; not that it is absolutely necessary that her husband should be in the Lord, a converted person, a believer in Christ; though such an one should be most desirable and eligible: but either that she should continue in the possession of her faith in Christ, and not relinquish it for the sake of an husband; or that she enter into this state in the fear of the Lord, calling upon him, and consulting him in such an important affair; and take care that whom she marries is not within the line prohibited by the Lord.

**Ver. 40.** *But she is happier if she so abide*, etc.] That is, a widow, in an unmarried state; which is to be understood not of the happiness of another world, but of this: the apostle’s meaning is, that she would be more free from cares, and less liable to trouble, would live with more peace and quietness, and be more at leisure to serve the Lord, second marriages oftentimes proving more disagreeable than the first; but in this the apostle only gives his opinion, enjoins nothing by way of command, or in an authoritative manner: and therefore adds,

*after my judgment*: according to his sense of things, and agreeably to the advice he had before given to unmarried persons, whether virgins or widows, such a person was likely to have most peace, and least trouble, remaining a widow, than if married, and so consequently more happy: and in order to engage such to regard his counsel, he further says,

*and I think also that I have the Spirit of God*; that though he had no express command, nor did he pretend to any, nor did he lay any injunction on any, but left them to their liberty; yet he could not but think, nay, he



was assured, though he thus modestly expresses himself, that he was directed to give this advice by the Spirit of God.