

First Corinthians

VERSE-BY-VERSE

1st Corinthians

59 A.D.

Date of Writing

Ephesus

Place of Writing

Since chapter five, Paul has addressed immorality in the church, and he has continued to deal, indirectly, with that issue up to this point. He is writing about married and single life as it ties into the original problem in chapter five.

Paul was anticipating changes coming to the nation of Israel (and the entire Jewish world), and indeed in A.D. 70 just a decade later, the Jews would be dispersed throughout the world and life would never be the same. They would not exist as a nation again until the year 1948. Paul's message here seems to be it could be better to not be married with the turmoil that is coming. But, he knows for many, this would be difficult, if not impossible.

Chapter 7:32-40 | What's Best, Married or Single?

Verses 32,33–

But I would have you to be without carefulness. Paul doesn't mean careless. He wants them to be free to focus on the things of the Lord and not have to care for another. It is easier to serve the Lord single than married. That is not to say couples cannot serve the Lord together successfully; they can and do. But singleness, when it comes to serving the Lord is a good thing. Unfortunately, when we see a single man or woman on the mission field, for example, a first reaction may be to think *what's wrong with them?*

One of the questions often asked of Carol is, "Do you go the mission field with your husband when he travels to Cambodia?" Her response is yes, she *has* gone, but "It hinders him from working with the men because he is concerned for me and cannot put one hundred percent into his work there." That is legitimate. To some degree, I think that is Paul's primary point. With these tough times that are coming upon the nation, it might be easier to serve the Lord single. There is no dishonor in that.

Verse 34–

There is a difference also between a wife and a virgin. This is a clear statement, there is a difference between a married woman and an unmarried woman. Paul gives the same advice to women as he did for men. It is easier to serve the Lord as a single woman than as a married woman.

It is not, nor should it be taken as a sin that a wife cares for how to please her husband. The role in marriage is for a husband to please his wife and the wife to **please her husband**. If couples spent more time pleasing the other person, rather than their own gratification, we would have happier and healthier families.

Verse 35–

For your own profit. Paul is giving advice that will profit many who desire to serve the Lord. He is not giving this advice to **cast a snare** (NKJV: leash. Literally, a noose) on anyone. He is not trying to put a knot around anyone by encouraging singleness. The **own profit** in his statement is that they **may serve the Lord without distraction**. The word distraction means "to draw away" It is just a fact that there are distractions in marriage. Those of us who are married, and happily so, need to work hard at not being distracted by our spouse in our service to the Lord, while still pleasing them.

Verse 36-38–

Throughout this passage, Paul has not been forbidding marriage (or singleness). In [1 Timothy 4:3](#), Paul dealt with the problem of people forbidding marriage. We have the freedom to get married or stay single. Paul is pro-marriage. Yet, as we have seen, singleness can be an advantage.

There is a great deal of variance that takes place in translations when it comes to this verse which shows the difficulty in interpreting it:

If any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin,

NKJV/KJV: His virgin.

NIV: The virgin he is engaged to.

NASB: Toward his virgin daughter.

ESV: Toward his betrothed

NLT: His fiancée.

Darby: His virginity.

If she is pass the flower of *her* age (getting old!)KJV/NKJV: If she pass the flower of *her* age/youth.

NASB: Past her youth.

ESV: If his passions are strong.

NIV: If she is getting along in years.

Darby: If he be beyond the flower of his age.

Let him do what he wishes...let them marry.

Differences in translations from the KJV:

NKJV: 18%

ESV: 54%

NASB: 43%

NIV: 67%

NLT: 76%

Darby: 30%

Obviously, there is a debate about this verse. So what is Paul actually saying? The Greek text allows for it to be *his virgin*, or *his virginity*.

It could be Paul says (to paraphrase) *if you are getting older, and you are single, go ahead and get married if you are worried about it. It's not a sin.*

Evidence for the virgin to be referring to the man is in the phrase, **Pass the flower of *her* age**. It is in the masculine form in Greek text (and notice the italicized, *her*, meaning that word is not in the Greek).

The Darby translation might come the closest:

36 But if any one think that he behaves unseemly to his virginity, if he be beyond the flower of his age, and so it must be, let him do what he will, he does not sin: let them marry.

Verses 37,38 then,

37 But he who stands firm in his heart, having no need, but has authority over his own will, and has judged this in his heart to keep his own virginity, he does well. 38 So that he that marries himself does well; and he that does not marry does better.

What does this mean for us: We would probably not want to build a doctrine on these verses alone.

Verse 39-40–

A wife is bound by the law as long as her husband lives. Marriage only stays in place as long both the husband and wife live. If one dies, the spouse is **at liberty to be married to whom she wishes**. After the death of a spouse, the living man or woman can marry again if they want to, whomever they desire. **Only in the Lord**, she needs to find another believer to marry.

But, **she is happier if she remains as she is**. Paul says, it's **my judgment**, but I think she will be happier, and **I also have the Spirit of God**. He is clarifying how he received his own **judgment**, meaning, it is still God-breathed/inspired by God. It is inspired because it is written for us and preserved in Scripture. Paul's judgment was guided by the Holy Spirit.