

To Marry or Not to Marry? That is the Question (1 Cor. 7:25-40)

I. Introduction

- A. A difficult chapter to grapple with
- B. Review of the context (chapter 7:1-24)
- C. Reading the text - prayer for enlightenment
- D. Outline of sermon

II. The exegetical difficulties of the text

- A. **Who are the characters in the text?**
 1. Who are the *virgins* (*parthenoi*)?
 - a. Traditional view: “*virgin daughters*” (NASB)
 - b. Another view: “*betrothed*” (ESV/NIV)
 - c. *Parthenoi* is linked to “*betrothal*” in describing Mary and the parable of the virgins (Luke 1:27, Matt 25:1-13)
- B. **What is the context under which the advice is given?**
 1. What is the “*present distress*” in verse 26?
 - a. Events leading up to the second coming of Christ? Not likely because it is something going on at the present.
 - b. The suffering that necessarily comes from following Christ
 2. What does “*the time is short*” mean in vs. 29?
 - a. Is it that life itself is brief (a vapor or as the grass of the field)?
 - b. Our life is lived in the ‘already,’ with the ‘not yet’ in clear view

III. Exposition of the Text

- A. Verses 25-28: An opening statement establishing the advice to singles
 1. This is not a command, but advice
 2. Paul reiterates the “*stay as you are*” formula
 - a. Already in a betrothal contract? Do not seek to be free from it
 - b. Marriage is not a sin – who would think it was?
- B. Verse 29-35: Two reasons for the advice to singles not to marry
 1. the shortness of time (vss. 29-31)
 - a. 5 illustrations (marriage, weeping, rejoicing, buying, culture)
 - b. Married life in light of a world that is passing away
 - c. The grounds for Paul’s philosophy on singleness and marriage
 2. To be free from the anxieties associated with marriage (vss. 32-35)
 - a. singleness means freedom to serve and be devoted to God alone
 - b. this advice is to free you, not to put a noose around your neck
- C. Verses 36-38: To marry or not to marry? That is the question!
 1. Marriage is good
 2. Not marrying (for the right reason) is better
- D. Verses 39-40: A final statement advising widows not to remarry
 1. The permanency of marriage

IV. The relevancy of the text to our lives as Christians

1. This text calls us to single-hearted devotion and service to Christ, living in light of crisis, brevity, and a fading world
2. Establish a Biblical view of our marriages in a Christian sub-culture that worships family (Luke 14:26)
3. What is it that makes you happy in life? (temporal or eternal)