

Remaininig in your Calling

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- [0 : 00] Good morning. Welcome to the service this morning. The kind of the last Sunday or weekend before fall, September.
- ! So time does fly. We're just barely done with Sunday school in the end of June. And now we're going to be back in it next Sunday. And so thank you for that reminder, Jake, as you did the announcements.
- That for Sunday school to function, we need to have commitment to teaching. And so give that very close consideration.
- The Lord would have you to teach the children as well. The song, Bringing in the Sheaves, kind of struck a chord in my heart this morning.
- And I just thought I'd ask, is anyone here this morning that is old enough to remember sheaves? A few. Remember them maybe from pictures, but actually working with them?
- [1 : 18] Some of us, yeah. In German we say guaven. Yeah. Gather the sheaves for the harvest. And in a farmer's context, all the labor of, from spring onward, to plant the seed, to do his best to nurture it, to pull the weeds and so on and take care of it, and then to reap, to bring in the harvest.
- In the context of the song, the Jewish people have been in captivity in Babylon, and they're getting released. And they're singing, rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves.
- They're reaping a return to the Lord as their hearts have been struck. But then in our context, this morning, spiritually, as we toil on, as we continue to work for the Lord, as we continue in our marriages, at our jobs, we're affected by, by the curse.
- And so we look forward to the end of all that, where we ultimately will be bringing in the sheaves, we'll be reaping, reaping a life's harvest.
- harvest. And so just a word of encouragement that often we struggle. As we walk through this life, it's not always an easy road.
- [3 : 15] And it's been promised to us that it won't be an easy road for many reasons, but ultimately, it gets us to focus on the Lord and on eternity.
- And so as we sing that song, just remember, our day of reaping is ahead. And ultimately, it's going to be the Lord reaping the crop, His children, and taking them home.
- So may the Lord bless us with those thoughts. We've had in our bulletin the last few Sundays that we would just like you to prayerfully consider our leadership changes in that bringing Pastor Henry on into full-time position.
- And today, after the service, we'd like to follow through with that, follow through, and actually get some input from the men. But just a little background here.
- So, as of this past January, the conference structure asked if I would come on half-time as their conference chairman to lead the conference.
- [4 : 39] And so after consideration, even here at this church, we agreed that would be a mission to the conference. And so in lieu of that, we've recognized we need more help.

And so our plan from the leadership aspect is that we would like to choose more men into leadership.

And I keep saying in the near future, my goal and vision for that is early in the new year. That we would select more men to start in a leadership role of training.

And so alongside myself and Pastor Henry and Julius and Ben as deacons to expand because of the growing need.

whether we are church planting or expanding here, there's a lead for leadership to go out. So that is our goal.

[5 : 50] And as our group develops, we can better identify our giftings and assign workload accordingly.

And so according to our giftings as well. And so if we have more people in the team, we're better rounded to meet all the needs in the congregation.

So I by myself don't have all the giftings. And you all very well know that. And so two have more of them, three, four, and five would likely be able to cover all of it.

So that's healthy. So that is our plan going forward, just so you know. And of course we have been teaching leadership classes and so on for the last number of years.

Training, allowing God to mature, brothers, to get ready for this. So just a little bit of direction here and vision so that you understand what's going on.

[7 : 02] So today after the service we're going to ask the brothers to stay back and we'll just talk a little bit further on that and see if there is consensus to go forward.

All right, so back to Corinthians and marriage. Now this is the third message that I've done in chapter seven.

I'm going to try to just swing through it quite rapidly this morning as we focus kind of on the last aspect of what he's teaching here.

And so Paul has been answering the questions regarding marriage. Is it right to be married? Is it of the Lord?

Is it his will? And the answer is yes, it is in most cases because of sexual immorality.

[8 : 05] It's kind of the underlying theme. We need to be in marriage relationship because of how God has designed us. And we talked about being single for life is a gift, the gift of celibacy, the gift to be able to not be governed by those personal drives and to be able to serve the Lord more fully.

So then Paul addresses a number of groups of people here and I'm just going to recap. So chapter 7, verse 8 and 9, he speaks to the unmarried and Paul says, it would be my desire that you remain like I am, unmarried, in order to serve the Lord more fully.

But, if you cannot exercise self-control, get married. Seek your partner. self-control is in the intimate realm of sexuality.

And so that is the first group of people addressed here, is Paul in his view, his thinking is better to be single, but then he recognizes also God's design that most of us aren't able.

Get married. The second group of people is to the married believers. And there he instructs them in verse 10 and 11 that a wife is not to depart from her husband and even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband and a husband is not to divorce his wife.

[10 : 05] So from this perspective, from this teaching, God is very firm that in marriage, two believers are not to divorce.

They are to work through their issues. And he does make room for separation, but then if a need, if the need arises for intimacy that they reconcile.

So Paul does not open the door here at all in this passage for divorce and remarriage. And we did talk about Jesus making an exception in Matthew, except for fornication or sexual immorality would be a grounds for divorce.

And we had discussed that a few weeks back. And then the third group of people is likely stemming from two unbelievers in marriage and one of them coming to the faith.

And in that situation, in that situation, Paul is teaching here that the believer, the one that's come to the faith, whether wife or husband, is not to depart from her partner unless the unbelieving partner says, get out.

[11 : 48] Then you're free to go and you're not under the bondage of marriage. marriage. So that is, in the day, in the first century where Christianity was preached, many, many will have come to the faith and there will have been many unequal be yoked marriages.

Many. And Paul addresses that. And if the unbeliever is willing to live with you, serve the Lord under that.

Serve the Lord. But if he's not or she's not, then you are free to depart. In fact, it's better to keep the peace, as he words it here.

You're not under bondage. And like I brought out at that message, that many scholars believe that might have applied to Paul himself, that he could identify.

And because of being a Pharisee, and so on, that he likely was married, and upon his conversion, his wife may have left.

[13 : 09] So that is, that is, we can't take that as solid evidence, but it's very likely that was the situation.

So Paul could identify as he writes here. And so that is instruction to the unbelievers when they're unequally yoked. And by the way, just a note on that, nowhere in Scripture does it give permission for a believer to marry an unbeliever.

You're not to enter into an unyoked relationship. It is forbidden because it is light and darkness.

And there's clashing. There's no spiritual connection. And so that is, that is not permissible.

And so for our young people, we need to understand that and not pursue relationships of the opposite sex that are not in the faith.

[14 : 30] Because you will reap a harvest of grief. and for those of us married this morning, we can testify that marriage between two believers is hard work.

There are many moments of trials and if one is an unbeliever and does not understand the ways of God, the vision is entirely different.

Their outlook in life, their goals, what they're working towards is so different. And there's just no connection. So hence the very strong warning of that.

Now as we get into today's message, and I'll be skimming through the rest of this chapter quite fast to do an overview, but the first section, verses 17 to 24, I'm going to give a little more time there, is the fourth group of people and that is, well I don't know if it's a group of people, but it's to everyone and he is making a case when you come to the faith, don't be obsessed with changing your circumstances.

Rather, focus on your faith. Focus on maturing in Christ rather than changing your circumstances.

[16 : 17] And he gives a few examples and so let's work through it. But as God, verse 17 in Corinthians 7, but as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk.

And so I ordain or direct in all the churches. Was anyone called, that's called to the faith, while circumcised, let him not become uncircumcised.

Now when it speaks of called while circumcised, which people group is in mind here? The Jews. He says, if you come to the faith as a Jew, don't try to not be a Jew.

Keep being a Jew, but in the faith. And today we would say, Messianic Jew, a believer in the Messiah. Don't try to not be a Jew.

Because maybe the pressures are that I don't want to associate with the Jews who are so steeped in religion. No, don't worry about it.

[17 : 32] Serve the Lord. Serve the Lord. And maybe many of our backgrounds we can identify with that. we're not to be consumed with disowning, but rather with owning Christ.

Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Not a Jew, like a Gentile? Let him not be circumcised. Don't become a Jew or circumcised because you're in the faith now, because circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing when it comes to faith.

It means there's no heart change with a physical circumcision. And circumcision originally back in Abraham's day was given as a sign of his faith.

And he was commanded to circumcise his household and those who would descend from his loins. So the Jewish people practiced circumcision to the coming of Christ.

But it was to be a sign that they were in the faith. But later Paul says not all who are Jews are Jews because they're not in the faith.

[18 : 58] And so circumcision is nothing, and Paul says in Romans, it's the circumcision of the heart that matters. A cut heart, heart surgery.

as we turn to God in faith and he gives us a new heart. That is what matters. Not the outward.

Verse 20, let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it, but if you can be made free, rather use it.

that's a hard one for us to grasp. In the first place, we don't identify with slavery, with being a possession to another man.

Anyone here that identifies? I stand corrected if there is. We don't identify, do we? And now, for us to belong to another person, to follow their command, that's something foreign.

[20 : 18] I mean, the closest we come is the employer and employee relationship. But that's not slavery, because if our employer doesn't treat me well, I'm off.

I work elsewhere. but a slave can't and couldn't and often wasn't treated so good. And so here, in this context, Paul tells his audience that if you come to Christ while a slave, do not be occupied with becoming free.

Rather, serve the Lord in slavery. Do not be consumed with winning personal freedom when you're free in Christ.

But he does add that if you can be made free, well, of course, if that door does open, take it.

But don't be consumed with the rest of your life trying to find a way to be made free. For you are free in Christ to serve your master.

[21 : 41] And like I said, that is something that is foreign to us. we don't understand it in its depth. And it puts on a whole new scale what it means to be free in Christ versus our personal freedoms here on earth.

life. If your marriage has had rough spots or if you are in a rough spot, maybe you feel like you are in slavery.

It can go that way. It's not the Lord's will that it is like that. But it does happen. But we are not to seek to get out, but rather to work through it.

And so here, the illustrations that Paul gives us is that we are not to seek to change our circumstances.

And in the context of marriage in this whole chapter, we then bring in our marriage status. So if you are married and you become a Christian, don't seek to get unmarried.

[23 : 15] There comes in the situation where we come into Christ and there's a whole trail of relationships behind me in sin.

Paul is saying don't seek to change where you're at today. When you come to Christ, dwell on serving Him in your current marital status.

there's many situations and I've faced some of them where couples come to faith or one individual and there are a number of previous marriages or relationships.

What do we do with that? You know what the best thing to do is to turn to the Lord in humility and ask for direction.

And generally speaking from this passage, don't seek to undo where you're at right now, but now serve the Lord. Lord. Let's turn to Luke chapter 4.

[24 : 54] Luke chapter 4 comes to mind here. Verse 18 in Luke 4.

Jesus, in the beginning of his ministry, stands up in the synagogue and he reads this passage. He says, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.

He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

And we see that Christ's whole purpose in coming was to heal, to save those in trouble.

Those whose life is a mess. That includes me and each one of you. And he invites us to salvation with your mess.

[26 : 35] And I will heal you. I will show you a different way. I will bring peace to your heart. I will enable you to serve me.

This is Christ's purpose. And so, we tend to focus very heavily on marriage and divorce and remarriage.

instead of focusing on the positive, how can I serve my Lord? Better and more fully. And that seems to be the theme here as Paul brings that out.

Don't be consumed with trying to change your status. Rather, focus on the Lord within your circumstances today.

In Genesis chapter 1, God said, let us make man in our image.

[27 : 54] And we are made in the Lord's image, the believer and the unbeliever. We are created in the Lord's image.

And what is one of the chief ways that we are in His image? What aspect of being in His image reflects God? Maybe my question isn't very clear.

It's what I have in mind here is God has designed us with the capacity and the need for relationships.

Amen? Amen? Without relationships, we are miserable, lonely, unfunctional in life.

And so God has designed us for relationships first with Him. We need to fill the need to be related to our Father who created us.

[29 : 21] And then secondly, to each other. And those relationships go from the most intimate one which is marriage to close friendships to work relationships to the family of God relationships and others.

but without them, we are empty. We are empty. We need each other because it's by God's design.

And so we recognize that marriage is one of the key aspects of relationship and we are to do it the Lord's way.

I thought I'd just bring that in because it's important that we understand that. And having said that, it is no wonder that Satan would like for your marriage to be destroyed.

because he understands these concepts.

[30 : 51] He was in good standing with the Father. He was with him serving him as the chief created angel. He understands.

and when he became prideful and said, I am not satisfied here. I want to be my own God.

Then our Father kicked him out of heaven, so to speak. And his future is separated from God for all eternity.

And so hence, he likes to break up relationships. So let's keep that in mind. And it's not just marriage, it's all relationships.

But the marriage is the key one. And so it's good that we talk about these things because it's very, very real. Now I have a question for the married.

[31 : 56] What's the hardest part about marriage? admitting when you're wrong.

Okay. That's a good start, Ben. Communications. Okay. Another aspect of it.

Anyone else? test, you can't answer. Test, test, you can't answer. If I would sum it up, all the areas, you know what it is?

Dying to self. Crucifying the flesh. Because when we get married, we're not asked to both give 50% into marriage to make 100.

We're both to give 100%. My spouse doesn't want 90% of me, she wants all of me, and vice versa.

[33 : 24] Dying to self is in the way of successful marriage. And every time there are issues, there's a problem with the flesh is on the throne instead of the Holy Spirit.

There are no exceptions. We need to recognize that. I'm going to move on.

I'm going to skim through the rest of the chapter. Just touching in briefly, and we'll start in verse 25, 25 to 28.

Now concerning virgins, I have no commandment from the Lord, yet I give judgment as one whom the Lord in his mercy has made trustworthy. I suppose therefore that this is good because of the present distress, that it is good for a man to remain as he is.

Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But even if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned.

[34 : 43] Nevertheless, such will have trouble in the flesh, but I would spare you. So now to the unmarried again. He says, I have no commandment from the Lord, and let's not confuse this with this was not of the Lord, but it means that the Lord Jesus himself did not directly speak on this.

But Paul is now addressing it as moved by the Holy Spirit. and it says, concerning virgins, male and female, that because of the present distress, and we kind of think with our circumstances under the Roman Empire, there was heavy, heavy persecution that had already started and would get worse.

And life is tough. And Paul says, it's easier to go through that and serve the Lord alone than with a family.

So that's his thoughts there in that aspect. And so he says, if you are bound, if you are married, don't seek to get out, and if you're not, don't seek a partner.

That's his opinion. But if you do decide to marry, you have not sinned. it's not against the Lord. So he's putting in their circumstances, their context, and saying in their view, it's a bad time to get married because of the troubles.

[36 : 27] So you can wade through that. It's maybe not necessarily a direct application to us today, but we too likely will have persecution more in our life to come.

that's verses 25 through 28, 29 to 31. But this I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none, those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as they did not rejoice, and those who buy as though they did not possess, and those who use this world as not misusing it, for the form of this world is passing away.

And again, the thought line here is that serving the Lord has to come first, even above our relationships.

And part of marriage is weeping and rejoicing that will come naturally. He also brings in being consumed with this world, with making money, and being intertwined with this world.

He says those things want to creep in and consume us, and he says don't. And so even to the married, put it in perspective that I need to serve God above serving my spouse.

[38 : 13] Kind of in a nutshell, that's what he's saying there. And then 32 to 35, but I want you to be without care, for he who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord, but he who is married cares about the things of the world, how he may please his wife.

There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy, both in body and in spirit, but she who is married cares about the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, that you may serve the Lord without distraction. And relationships take time and effort.

Even a friendship takes time. And so as marriage partners, we do have to invest.

And so our service to the Lord has a limitation because my spouse needs part of me and vice versa.

[39 : 50] But if we're both vision to serve the Lord, we can do it together, and yet even having said that, we need to spend time together to please our spouse, so to speak.

And we love to do that. And it makes a healthy marriage because that's how I show I love her, and vice versa, is when we take time for one another and we do things together.

And when my wife does things, goes out of her way to do something for me, it speaks volumes of her love, her commitment.

commitment. So it does take time. So we have to acknowledge that. And so Paul is acknowledging it. But the virgin, male or female, is free from marriage relationship to serve the Lord, to present his or her body and soul wholeheartedly to the Lord.

Lord, we're not limited by an intimate relationship that needs attention. That's what he is saying here. Moving on, I'll just make another point here.

[41 : 30] we must remember that marriage here on earth is a reflection of Christ and the church.

And Jesus reminds us that in heaven, there will be no marriages. marriages. except that we will be married to him.

So your marriage here on earth is symbolic, as Christians, of Christ and the church. It's a reflection of it.

puts a bit of a serious aspect to it, doesn't it? Sometimes we don't reflect it so well, do we?

The two shall become one. Not just intimately, physically, but emotionally, spiritually.

[42 : 57] and it's a wholesome reflection of Christ and the church. This is God's will, His design for your marriage.

And so we need to then seek the Lord. To seek the Lord. And if we feel we're not there, both of us, seek the Lord.

And as I often use when I do a wedding, the triangle principle, and I'm just going to redo it again because it's so simple and it makes sense, but as two married people on the corners of the triangle and God at the top, and as we get married and we grow in our relationship to God, what happens to us?

we get closer and closer and closer together. And so a marriage that is faltering, that is falling apart, you cannot tell me that you're thriving with God.

It's not true. Because if you're thriving with God, look what happens. and so one or both are falling short in their walk with God.

[44 : 39] That's real life and we need to face that. Now I'll quickly move on, 36.

And down, if any man thinks he is behaving improperly toward his virgin, if she is past the flower of youth and thus it must be, let him do what he wishes, he does not sin, let them marry.

Nevertheless, he who stands steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but has power over his own will, and has so determined in his heart that he will keep his virgin, does well.

So then he who gives her in marriage does well, but he who does not give her in marriage does better. This is a very hard, difficult passage to understand and there's basically two interpretations and one is that in their culture that a father would set the course for his daughters whether they got married or not.

And a father that wanted to serve the Lord might make a decision that my daughters are going to remain in celibacy in order they too can serve the Lord.

[46 : 00] That's one interpretation. I think the better one is rather that the word virgin there speaks of virginity, which it can also be interpreted as.

nevertheless he who stands steadfast in his heart having no necessity but has power over his own will and has determined in his heart that he will keep his virginity does well.

So it's more in the personal context of what Paul is speaking in the rest of the chapter. And so then with that again whether you get married or not depending on your ability to stay pure or not to be driven by your intimate drives.

And the last two verses a wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives but if her husband dies she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes only in the Lord but she is happier if she remains as she is according to my judgment and I think also I also have the spirit of God.

So verse 39 just sums up that marriage is for life till death do us part.

[47 : 30] A wife is bound as long as her husband lives and the husband is not to divorce his wife. This is God's principles his heart and if a partner does die we are free to remarry if it is the Lord's will.

And I just want to make a note on that when it says to be married to whom she wishes only in the Lord it does not necessarily only mean to marry a believer but also what is the will of God for your life.

And so if you are a widower or a widow here this morning the will of God needs to be sought in seeking remarriage.

And if you feel led to be remarried of course the other side is that would have to be a believer. And generally as older widows and widowers in the faith there will be no desire for an unbeliever because we long for that fellowship in the faith.

But to follow and to seek the Lord's guidance and so he concludes chapter seven. What do we learn?

[49 : 18] Serve the Lord that comes up and above our relationships. He's given us guidance to relationships but through and through and through that we would learn and desire to serve our God who has saved us.

So whether you are single and looking at marriage or whether we are married these principles apply may that marriage would not restrain us from following the Lord.

May the Father bless you with this teaching and that we would pursue him in whatever state you're at even here this morning. Father we thank you for your word.

It's a longer teaching Lord that you gave us here and not necessarily an easy one and yet it portrays your heart your desires for human relationships and all of these human relationships Father flow out of our relationship with you.

Father may you instill that truth in our hearts that we would truly grasp that I thank you for the brothers and sisters here this morning may you bless them as they go forward in the image of Christ pray this in Jesus name Amen