

Jeff Corinthians 12

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[0:00] We left off yesterday dealing with the lawsuits issue. After that, as we said yesterday in the second half of this chapter, Paul takes up another issue involving sexual immorality.

! And here it's one particular type of immorality, men going to prostitutes. Another one of those issues that we just, it's mind-boggling when we think about that, perhaps. But it does appear that some among the spiritual had argued for the right to visit prostitutes. And so in these verses, Paul is going to stress the importance of the body. And we know from chapter 15 that some were denying resurrection. So it appears that some perhaps drew the conclusion that our bodies were going to be done away with. So it didn't really matter what we did with them.

This idea would be part and parcel with Greco-Roman dualism of spirit and body. Spirit, the spiritual realm, and all that it involved is of a higher order.

[1:04] It is good. It's the only thing that's ultimately significant. Whereas the material world, the body, the physical world was inferior, if not evil. And of course, that's going to develop in later Gnostic writings and thought, such that the material world is going to be associated with not the true and living God, but an inferior God.

The God of Israel is an inferior God who made the world different from the highest God, the true God. So that's probably not at work here yet.

But nonetheless, the idea is similar. So the material world is at worst to be despised. At best, it's of no consequence.

So the body's of no consequence. It doesn't really matter what you do with it. If you have appetites, like food and sex, well, you might as well satisfy them. It's of no consequence. There's no harm in it. That's likely the mindset that Paul is confronting here. It's a little tricky to interpret this section because Paul is dealing, and almost all commentators would see this, Paul is quoting slogans of the Corinthians in his argument.

[2:21] I think that's exactly right. Although not everyone has agreed as to just what the slogans are and how far they extend in the text. But the heart of Paul's argument is going to be to draw a distinction between two things that the Corinthians were equating.

And we'll see how that works. He begins in verse 12 by utilizing what I think most would acknowledge is a slogan of the Corinthians. I think 12a and 12c repeat what is likely one of these. All things are lawful for me. And if you see in your, if you have the NIV, you see that that phrase is put in quotation marks to indicate that Paul is quoting them.

And so this is the stoic and cynic ideal of autonomy. The enlightened person, the wise person, the person who is free from passions, free from the world's attachments.

He's in possession of himself. He is possession of his thoughts. And so because of that, he's free to do whatever he wants. Now, Paul doesn't reject the slogan entirely, but he does qualify it.

[3:46] Well, let's say that all things are lawful. Not all things are helpful. Not all things are profitable. And then the second qualification, he repeats it.

All things are lawful for me, but I will not be enslaved by anything. So there are things that may be lawful. They may be acceptable. Maybe they're not sinful, but they can be enslaving, which is an important principle about our use of anything in our physical lives.

Anything can be made a God, right? Anything can become the source of our joy and the source of our security and the source of our identity, the source of our dependence.

In other words, anything has the potential to replace Christ as our great joy and our great motivation and our great source of meaning.

So Paul is wanting them to be sobered by that. But then he goes on, verse 13. Most also see verse 13a as a slogan.

[4:50] That's in quotes here in the ESV. Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food. And God will destroy both one and the other.

Now, if you look in the translation, the ESV, the version I have, has quotation marks that end after food.

Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food, in quotation marks. And God will destroy both one and the other. So the idea is that, you know, Paul makes the quote and then he adds, God will destroy both one and the other.

I don't think that's right. I think if it is a slogan, that it's more likely that the slogan includes, God will destroy both one and the other.

Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy both one and the other. I think that's the slogan. And I say that because the idea that the physical body is important, is precise, or is unimportant, is precisely the idea that Paul is trying to refute.

[6:04] So if he said, God will destroy both one and the other, that sort of agrees with their point. It's going away, and so it doesn't matter what we do. So I prefer to see the quotation mark going farther.

And ending with, God will destroy both one and the other. So what's the thrust of the slogan? Well, it's that food and the body both belong to the present age, which ultimately will pass away, and which in many ways has been replaced by the new age.

And so it's therefore of no ultimate significance. Now here's what I mentioned about Paul drawing a distinction between two things that they were equating. Apparently, some of the Corinthians were extending this logic about food and the body to the body more generally, particularly the realm of sex.

So if the body is insignificant ultimately, and it's going to be done away with, then sexual activity doesn't matter either. Paul counters that argument. He's saying, no, that's different.

Verse 13b, The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

[7:19] So Paul is saying, no, the body is for the Lord. It will not be destroyed. It will be resurrected by the Lord. Christ's resurrection is proof of this.

Verse 14, God raised the Lord, and will also raise us by His power. So our bodies are not insignificant. They are a gift from God. They are part of who we are.

We are not simply to gratify our impulses. We're not animals. We're different than the animals. They are to be used for the Lord, for His good and holy and redemptive purposes.

And I don't, I think Paul is intentional here to use the word Lord. Body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

In other words, Jesus is the master of our bodies and rules over what we do with our bodies. So this is an extremely important theological section on the body, which in the West, this text has never been more important, nor has the Bible's doctrine of the body ever been under more attack.

[8:42] Redemption involves not just our spirit, but our entire person. And so what we do with our body matters. Our bodies, as well as our souls, have been redeemed by Christ.

Paul is, he's being careful here. He's not exegeting in depth that slogan.

He doesn't counter it. All things are lawful. He's just using it because it's something they're saying. It's something they believed. And so he's taking it and saying, okay, well, perhaps, but, I think it's sort of, that's what he's sort of saying.

Perhaps, perhaps this is true. If it is true, let's say it's true. Let's stipulate this. But nonetheless, let me qualify it. Let me fill it out with what, with what is true.

as he goes on, we won't spend too much time, but Paul then takes up, this is very important. He takes up the uniqueness of sexual sin and the incompatibility of sexual sin and belonging to Christ.

[9:50] Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? This is the foundation. Our bodies are members of Christ. In our union with him, we become, as it were, part of him.

In other words, we are so fully identified with Christ that even our bodies can be said to be members of him. In other words, our bodies are instruments.

We could put it this way. Our bodies are instruments for the expression of his character and his purposes. That's powerful, isn't it? We are members of Christ.

Our bodies are members of Christ. In other words, our bodies now are instruments for the expression of his character, for the fulfillment, pursuit and fulfillment of his purposes.

That's a profound statement Paul makes. In other words, we represent Christ in what we do with our bodies. So, therefore, it's unthinkable to take our bodies and join them to a prostitute.

[11:01] It's an outrageous thought, he's saying. And then Paul reflects on this further in verse 16. Do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her?

For it is written the two will become one flesh. Again, some are saying that what we do with our bodies don't matter. Even sex doesn't really matter.

Paul counters this by pointing out the deep significance, the sacred significance of sexual union. In sexual union, the two people become one body.

And Paul refers there back to the very foundations of creation to Genesis chapter 2 to buttress his argument. The two will become one flesh.

So he's exalting in their minds the significance of sexual activity. Paul is not saying, and we shouldn't understand it this way, he's not saying that every sexual union creates a marriage.

[12:14] But he is saying that sexual relations forge a profound connection and relationship between two people, which is part of the destructive effects of promiscuity.

What our culture in the West calls hook-up culture that trivializes sex and degrades sex into merely momentary pleasure or even a test for one's compatibility for someone else.

So it's a central answer to the problem of the Corinthians. This sacredness of sex.

On one level, sin is sin, right? But I think what Paul is arguing here is not that the person who sins sexually is necessarily worse than other sinners, but they are sinning in a way that is particularly destructive.

and even enslaving. And in a way that particularly denies Christ's lordship over the body. I think when it comes to the pastoral office, I think that highlights that.

[13:43] But especially if you're speaking of a married man who commits adultery, I mean, he has committed a cardinal sin.

It's in the Ten Commandments. He has broken the most sacred covenant a human being can have. And there is it so it is of utmost significance.

He has violated his covenant. He has put his marriage at risk. He has completely destroyed the trust people could have with him.

And so, yes, that is of utmost seriousness. A pastor who has a temper who can get angry with people, that's not good.

who is impatient, that's not good. But they're not the kind, they don't have the kind of destructiveness of sexual sin and they don't have the kind of, they don't destroy trust the way sexual sin does.

[15:03] So, on one level, sin is sin before God, yes, but on another level, different sins have deeper consequences and are more destructive.

And I think that tendency, if a man sins sexually as a pastor, it is disqualifying. I think that just recognizes that. Well, again, he is speaking of the deep connection that is formed between two people.

It's not a marriage, but it is profound. In sexual relations, you give yourself to another person. And you give part of yourself to another person.

And when that's casual and repeated, the result, I mean, this is part of what we see in our culture. The result is fragmented people. They've been giving themselves, part of themselves, deeply to other people and they're fragmented.

He goes on to say in verse 17 that our union with Christ, though, is even deeper. We become one spirit with him. And I think the reference here is to the Holy Spirit.

[16:20] The Holy Spirit joins our spirit intimately to Christ. We are united with Christ in the deepest way possible, which makes it all the more unthinkable to join ourselves immorally to another person.

So the bottom line of the whole argument, the main point of this section is in verse 18. Flee sexual immorality. Our bodies are members of Christ.

They're to be used for his glory. They will one day be resurrected. So flee. Don't reason with sexual sin. Don't toy with sexual sin. Don't accommodate thoughts of sexual sin.

Flee. Don't reason yourself. Well, I can handle a little tent. No. Run. Make no provision for it. Don't give an inch in your minds or hearts.

Take action. The reason comes in verse 19. Other sins are outside our body.

[17:21] Every other person, I'm sorry, this is verse 18. B, every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.

What does that mean? So Paul is saying, I mean, all sin is against God. All sin warrants his judgment, yes.

But there's a sense in which sexual sin is more serious or more harmful. And now, just how, from this verse, is often debated, but I think the context helps us.

I think the context makes it clear. Sexual sin is unique because of how it joins us to another. It establishes a union of sorts, which is particularly destructive and defiling.

And I think we could add to that, it runs uniquely counter to Christ's lordship over our bodies. Paul has just argued that our bodies are members of Christ.

[18:39] Our bodies are for the Lord. He is master of our bodies. And so, sexual immorality is especially contrary to Christ's lordship over our bodies.

We take them and join them to another and we risk putting them under the mastery of another. So, again, a person who's sinning sexually is not necessarily worse than other sinners, but they are sinning in a way that's particularly destructive and enslaving and particularly denying of Christ's lordship over us.

And then verse 19 gives a fundamental theological foundation for all of Paul's reasoning as Issachor was saying.

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you whom you have from God? In chapter three, Paul has argued that the church corporately is a temple of the Holy Spirit and that corporate sense of the church being God's temple is more emphasized.

It's the greater emphasis in the New Testament than individual. But here we see that our individual bodies are also temples of the Holy Spirit. So that corporate imagery is applied to the individual. And note that what Paul says here, not just the Spirit.

[20:08] When Paul talks about the Holy Spirit, he usually says the Spirit. I think it's only three times Paul says Holy Spirit.

I believe that's right, but this is one of them. Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit with critical implications for our lifestyles and behavior.

We must not desecrate this temple. What was the purpose of the temple? One of the key purposes of the temple was to bring glory to God, to sanctify His name.

And that is now the purpose of our bodies. And the implication of that is clear. You are not your own. Verse 19b.

And we have seen how that idea has run throughout 1 Corinthians, haven't we? It was announced at the outset of the letter. We're sanctified in Christ, set apart, for His purposes.

[21:12] In the context of the factions in chapter 3, Paul says, you belong to Christ. It's a central answer to the problems of the Corinthians. You belong to God.

So live that way. And then we have, of course, a wonderful application of the gospel in verse 20.

As you all know, we've talked about, you've talked about for a year and a half, the gospel applies everywhere to our lives. So often, the application is forgiveness, right?

Which is glorious, the removal of our debt, our justification before God, which is a legal declaration that we are in the right despite our sin.

It's not as, I think of new perspective on Paul, God's declaration that we are in the covenant people of God. It has nothing to do with the entrance into the Christian life.

[22:12] It's God looks at us, he sees in us marks of justification and then he calls us justified, which is very, it's not too far from a Roman Catholic view.

No, God declares us righteous before God based on nothing that we do. It does mark the entrance to the Christian life. But that's so often how we apply the gospel and that's glorious, that's life changing, that's soul freeing, that's God's love assuring.

But here's another less common application of the gospel. Christ redeemed us, which means that he owns us. He's bought us so we are his.

He redeemed us out of the slave market of sin and we have a new master and boy, he is a wise and kind and all powerful master who always has our good at heart.

So we simply don't have the option of ruling over our lives because he's, they belong to him. He's purchased us. A glorious gospel application there.

[23:20] He's clearly saying here this whole thing is about taking one's body, not the church, it's not corporate, your body, you're joining it to a prostitute.

So the whole context here is talking about our individual bodies. And as I said, this is one of the most significant texts on the theology of the body. And then he even says, he doesn't say you are a temple of the Holy Spirit.

He says your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. And the whole context is so therefore what you do with one's body matters, don't join that body to a prostitute. So he is saying that the Christian, a Christian who is indwelt by the Spirit is indeed a temple of the Holy Spirit.

And I think that's true. He said, are they a member of a church? I think they remain. If they're a Christian, a Christian can be outside of a church.

Now, that's not God's will. Right? But a Christian can be outside of a church. That if they're truly trusting in Christ, they're still a Christian. They may be in disobedience.

[24:27] Or maybe there's just no church around and it's an unusual situation. But they're still possessed of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit dwells in them.

So, again, I would agree that the emphasis, the stronger emphasis in the New Testament is that the church corporately is the temple.

We are the new temple. But this is an individual application of it. We do, the Spirit does indwell us. And so, in that sense, we are not, and I'll put it this way.

It's not just, yes, the church is the temple, and yes, we are temples. As an individual, I am not a temple of God in the same way that the church is a temple of God.

The place where God and man meets. The place where God uniquely reveals himself. So, the significance of the church as the temple is broader and wider.

[25:24] But I think if I could paraphrase Paul, I would say, yes, that's really significant. And so, the church is the, in the new covenant, that is the new temple.

But it's also true, not in every single way, but it's also true that because the Holy Spirit dwells in you, it can be said of you that you are a temple of the Holy Spirit. In other words, myself, as an individual, being a temple of the Holy Spirit is real, and it's true.

The implications of that are not, that doesn't mean that I am as significant individually as the church. In other words, the applications of that temple topology apply to the church in more significant and broader and more ways than they do of me.

But it's still true that each of us is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Does that get to your questions? Yeah, I see what you're saying.

I wouldn't see it that way. The whole thing is about the body. He's not, I think for that to be true, all of a sudden, Paul is using body in a different way, meaning the church body.

[26:42] And I don't think that's the context. I think he's saying that, you know, and again, it's body, body, body. Don't you know that he who

joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her?

Every other sin a man commits is outside the body. Not outside the church, it's outside the body. But the sexually immoral person sins against his, and here's the connection, 18B sins against his own body.

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit? So, I just think contextually, it's speaking of the individual body, which is true distributively, meaning it's true of each of us.

Now, by extension, and thinking back to chapter 5, does that, that person joining himself to a prostitute, does that affect the body of the church?

Does that affect the whole church? Yes, it does. We've already seen Paul dealing with that. I think it does have effects on us, but I think that seems to me to be the reference. And then, let me just, I just want to mention that the ultimate purpose of all of this, the purpose of belonging to him, comes in this final critical phrase, so glorify God in your body.

[28:03] And if you remember our structural comments, I made the point that in the heart of this letter, chapters 5 to 14, Paul deals with sort of the two main issues, sexual immorality and idolatry.

He deals with sexual immorality in a negative, corrective way, chapters 5 and 6, and then he deals with it in a positive way, chapter 7. But he ends the negative treatment with a statement about ultimate purpose, glorify God in your body.

And then when he goes to idolatry, he's going to deal with it negatively, chapters 8 to 10. And then he ends that negative section with a statement of ultimacy. Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God, and then he'll deal with idolatry in a more positive sense in terms of what is true worship.

So here, I think you have a key structural statement that sums up this whole issue.

Our goal, our purpose is to bring glory to God. It was the ultimate purpose of the temple. It's the ultimate purpose of our lives.

[29:13] It's the ultimate purpose of all things. And what does it mean? Because it's easy to say, bring glory to God, bring glory to God, right?

What does it mean? It helps to know what it means, right? Since we're told to do it. It's a remarkable statement that sinners, that we are, we actually have, and God in his eternal glory, he's independent, he's untouched, he's immutable, nothing can change him.

He exists forever. He is the one true and living God, omnipotent, omniscient.

We have, needing nothing, needing no one, who works all things according to the counsel of his will, and we actually have the capacity to bring him glory. It's breathtaking.

Well, I think at the root of it is, how do we bring him glory? We can't add to his glory. But we can, in our lives, show him to be glorious.

[30:38] In other words, we can show him by the way we speak and the way we think and the way we live. We can show him to be great and beautiful and valuable and wise and strong and kind and good and holy and merciful.

To glorify him is to make clear to others what God is like, so that they too will see and praise and admire him.

That's what our bodies are ultimately for, to show God to be glorious. I think that's what's at the root of the idea.

What a great privilege. All right, well, let's go to chapter 7. We come now to, we find a major structural transition.

As Paul begins to take up the issues raised to him in the letter, which, again, was probably in response to his letter.

[31:43] Here we have Paul's famous pericope. Now, concerning. And we're going to see pericope here in chapter 7, verse 1. We're going to see it in 7:25. We're going to see it in chapter 8, verse 1.

Chapter 12, verse 1. Chapter 16, verse 1. It's not always clear whether each of these is taking up an issue in the letter. This one clearly is, and I think most of them are.

And let me just say this. I think this structural observation. Okay, now concerning the things about which you wrote. There is a pastoral insight to be gained there.

Think about all that Paul has covered in these six chapters. He is only now taking up the Corinthians' concerns. Only now taking...

All right, now let me answer your questions after the lengthy discussions where he's called them to unity. He's reassorted his authority. He has corrected the church.

[32:43] He's instructed the church. He's called them to new standards of holiness. In other words, what's my point? He's not content to allow them to control the agenda. He answers their questions only after laying the theological groundwork upon which the answers to his questions will be based.

So he's covered so many things already that are going to help frame his responses to their questions and prepare them for his responses to their questions and provide a gospel foundation for his responses to their questions.

So let's not miss Paul's pastoral strategy here. Now, we noted chapter 7 continues Paul's teaching on sexual purity.

In chapters 5 and 6, he deals with it negatively. Chapter 7, he addresses it positively. So this idea of holiness does continue. You can almost think of chapter 7 as an explication of chapter 6, verse 20. He says, glorify God in your body. And when we do come to chapter 7, it deals primarily with questions regarding marriage.

[33:53] In fact, no other section in all of Scripture deals so thoroughly with marriage-related questions. And we're not going to be able to cover all the details, unfortunately, but hopefully we'll get a feel for the whole.

So, what is behind what's happening? Well, you see, he begins, now concerning the matters about which you wrote.

So it's a question. And then you see a quote here, and most would see this is what they have said. This is what they're asking. It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.

And so, there is at work here an ascetic impulse in the Corinthian church. Some are forbidding marriage, or some are advocating that marriages be dissolved, or some are advocating that those in marriage abstain from sexual relations in their marriage and live celibate lives.

Now, you might think, well, that seems inconsistent with what we saw in chapter 6. Guys are going to prostitutes and think that that's okay. Well, I don't think, I just think that shows that life and people are complex.

[35:10] And bad ideas and error can have different implications. And bad ideas can be taken in different directions. And ideas that, well, the human heart is deceitful, and it has a never-ending capacity to distort truth.

So, it's in this context that Paul takes up the questions. We could discern three main sections in the chapter. Verses 1 to 16 deal generally, basically, with those who are already married or those formerly married.

So, this is going to include relations within the marriage. It's going to, what happens when the spouse is abandoned, etc. In verse 17 to 24, we have this very interesting section in which Paul essentially argues that a person is to remain in the place you were at the time of your call.

The idea being that conversion doesn't necessarily entail a life change. Just because you're converted doesn't give you the right to escape your responsibilities.

On the other hand, when you're saved, that becomes your key identity. And so, changing your status doesn't give you a benefit over others. Becoming a slave isn't better than staying free.

[36:37] Becoming circumcised doesn't make you more of a Christian than you were before, etc. We'll look at that more in detail in a moment. The third section, 25 to 38, deal basically with those who have not yet married.

And then there's a special section added for widows. So, that's the general outline of the chapter. The way I'm going to deal with this is just to point out a few key exegetical points.

Again, the key to understanding the beginning of the chapter is the slogan or the question. It's good for a man not to touch a woman, which is what it actually says.

But that's just an idiom for not to have sexual relations. The original NIV really got that wrong. It said, it is good for a man not to marry. The phrase, not to touch a woman, never means that.

And that was corrected in 2011 to say, to have sexual relations. So, that's what's in view. And the background, so there's this ascetic impulse.

[37:43] This could have been a number of things. This could have been influenced by Stoic or Cynic philosophy, which taught that the unmarried have an advantage in pursuing wisdom, pursuing the meaning of life.

It could have drawn from popular Greek religion, in which virginity and sexual purity were associated with religious power, like priestesses in certain cults.

Maybe it draws from an over-realized eschatology that discounts our present existence. Whatever it is, regardless of the source, their response was in error.

And so, Paul responds basically by outlining sexual norms in a marriage. Spouses are to fulfill their sexual duties to each other. That's basically what he says.

And one of the surprising things and counter-cultural things here is that the language is completely reciprocal. And strongly so.

[38:50] So, this is not rooted in male-female roles. It involves the responsibilities of each spouse to each other. So, the wife does not have authority over her body, but the husband.

Likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. So, this is completely reciprocal, which would have been very counter-cultural. Now, when we come to this text, we just have to remember, this is not all the Bible has to say about marriage.

Okay? Paul is dealing within a specific situation. So, these kind of issues have to be handled with pastoral sensitivity. In other words, this isn't everything.

There is, within a marriage, there is, there is room for self-restraint. Between a couple, there is room for gentle refusal for a good reason.

There is, there is room for a husband to be sensitive to his wife. But the rule of thumb is don't, don't deprive with three qualifications.

[40:24] Don't deprive, except by agreement. So, it's got to be, it's got to be mutual, temporary. This shouldn't go on and on.

Shouldn't be allowed to go on and on. And for spiritual purposes. Okay?

Pretty straightforward. But again, we have to handle this wisely, pastorally. This isn't everything that the Bible tells, teaches about husbands and wives.

The husbands are to lay down their lives for their wives. Et cetera, et cetera. Ephesians chapter 5.

One small point that's often misunderstood, verse 6, Paul says, now, I say this as a concession, not a command.

Some connect this with verse 7 and say that Paul's concession is to be married. I say this as a concession, not a command.

[41:28] I wish all were myself. But hey, you know, in other words, I guess you can get married if you want to. It's much more natural to take the antecedent as what he's just said in verse 5.

In other words, the concession is temporary abstinence from sex in a marriage. Paul allows for that for certain reasons. But it's not necessary. He's not saying, so every couple should practice this.

No. It's not even his recommendation. For Paul, a full marriage relationship is the norm. But if there's good reasons, then yes, you can don't deprive each other, love each other, serve your spouse, but for good, for certain reasons, with certain qualifications, there's room for withholding.

As long as it's by agreement, as long as it's temporary and for spiritual purposes. Yes. Another important aspect of chapter 7 that's often overlooked.

This chapter makes a unique contribution on the subject of celibacy. And that topic is introduced in verse 7. I wish that all were as I myself am, but each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.

[42:56] So, Paul expresses his preference on this matter, not at all as a command, just the opposite, as a preference. And what's going to guide Paul's perspective throughout this chapter is one primary overriding concern.

So, have this in your mind when you read chapter 7. Well, have a couple of things in your mind when you read chapter 7. Paul is dealing with a question from them in a fairly narrow band of situations.

Okay? So, this isn't, Paul is not saying, okay, I'm going to do a marriage seminar and start from the beginning. No, he's addressing their questions, addressing a narrow set of circumstances. And secondly, his overriding concern, just realize this with chapter 7, is, what is the most effective way of serving the Lord in whatever circumstances you find yourself?

That's, that's, that governs his perspective in this whole thing. How can you best serve God in whatever circumstances you find yourself? That will protect us from drilling down and thinking that Paul is making absolute commands when he expresses his preference for something. For instance, his, his singleness. But again, with regard to celibacy, we learn a few things. First of all, it is a gift. It is a gift. Each has his own gift.

[44:28] You know, the, the word there is charisma. Each has a gift. Therefore, if it's a gift, it's neither inferior or superior to marriage.

Neither inferior or superior. Although, in light of verse two, the norm for men and women is marriage. Now, let's, to, to, to, to, to, to, arrive at a full view of this, we'd have to, theologically, we'd need to fill this out with other strands of biblical data.

So let's do that for just a second. What else would we take into account when it comes to marriage or a view on marriage? Or on singleness? Where do you go first?

Genesis, yes, that's where I go first. First meaning the beginning of the Bible. So yeah, the creation account. At the very founding of the human race, God brought male and female together, both made in his image with complementary roles, and it's very clear in chapter 2, he made them for each other.

He made a helper suitable for him. With the foundational statement, Genesis 2, 24, which is going to be appealed for throughout the Bible, whenever marriage is talked about, not whenever marriage, but many places marriage is talked about, even what Paul has mentioned in chapter 6, the two will become one flesh.

[45:59] So, and then what is the creation mandate? Genesis 1, 26? Yeah. Have babies.

Yeah, fill the earth and subdue it. Multiply, fill the earth, subdue it. So there's something foundational about this for male and female. Now, James mentioned Ephesians 5.

There's also the revealed purpose of marriage. There's something deeply significant about the marriage relationship that transcends all human needs and desires.

And so, Paul, in a sense, says, in light of Christ, the meaning of marriage is greater than we ever imagined.

I tell you something. In other words, marriage, the coming of Christ revealed that marriage is not simply a wonderful earthly institution, but a glorious picture of eternal realities.

[47:08] And it's those realities that then inform and guide how we live out our marriage. We could also point... So we're filling out a sort of a biblical theology of marriage.

We could also, in singleness, we could also point out the doctrine of sin. And Paul actually does this in verse 2. Because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.

He'll mention this again in verse 9. 9. If they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. It's better to marry than to be aflame with passion. So, in other words, marriage is a provision for the appropriate expression of sexual desires.

And in doing so, helps guard us from sexual sin. In other words, we just have to... We can't draw everything about marriage from Paul saying, let a husband and wife not withhold sexual relations from each other.

There's much more to marriage. Or, we can't say, you know, some have a gift for singleness, some don't. There's much more we could say.

[48:13] So, as part of God's creational purposes, marriage is foundational. It's the norm for men and women. However, how would we fill out, theologically, the celibacy side of the picture?

There's more to say on celibacy, too. Celibacy has ties to Christology. Did you know that? Jesus was fully, not partially human.

Which means what? Sexual relations are not a fundamental, non-negotiable part of what it means to be human. You're less than human if you're not having sexual relations.

No. Jesus was fully human. And pastorally, that is massive. So, the unmarried person can look to Jesus and know their complete humanness.

They are not fundamentally lacking. They're not living an inferior life until they get married. So, Christology helps inform this.

[49:25] Celibacy also has ties to what other field of theology? How about eschatology?

The eternal state will be a celibate state. Luke chapter 20. And so, God's eternal purposes in the new age will not include marriage as an ongoing experience for men and women.

So, clearly, celibacy is a calling.

And though it be an exception, it's not the norm, it's not a lesser calling. It's a noble one. Jesus himself spoke about this in Matthew 19. Remember when he spoke about eunuchs who were eunuchs from birth?

Eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven? And Paul, one of the reasons Paul commends it and recommends it, is because of its advantages in serving the Lord.

[50:33] Chapter 7, verse 32. I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord.

Verse 35b. I say these not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord. So, that's the reason.

Now, let me just, a couple of things I just mentioned here. Historically, celibacy began, and so we all sort of receive the consequences of history, right?

And it was in the fourth century that celibacy began to be seen as an ideal. It's better. And this was influenced by both Gnosticism and a Manichean, maybe from church history.

Remember the Manicheans? A Manichean dualism. And also a reaction against pagan immorality. So, after Christianity received acceptance in the Roman Empire, what happened?

[51:47] Persecution decreased. Church membership increased. People poured into the church because now it's the legal, not only is it legal, 325, but it becomes the official religion, 378, 382.

And so, what happened? Well, moral laxity in the church just skyrocketed. And so, some people began to withdraw from the church to pursue a higher and more pure Christianity and solitude.

That's what gave rise to the monastic movement. That's why, that's what gave rise to the emergence of what we call the Desert Fathers.

They wanted to pursue a purity of religion. The church was becoming secular and immoral. And so, they withdrew into the desert.

And so, that's why, all of a sudden, celibacy began to be seen as even a godlier thing. And, in fact, many hundreds of years later, 1075, Pope Gregory made celibacy obligatory.

[53:03] For priests, for bishops, and even for deacons in the Roman Catholic Church. And that was confirmed, that ruling was confirmed by the Council of Trent in 1563.

Council of Trent was 1545 to 63. It was at the end of the Council of Trent that that was made official. Now, what did the Reformers do? By the grace of God.

They got married, yes. Luther was marrying off. He was trying to get all these nuns and priests to marry each other. And he would smuggle out.

He smuggled out nuns out of, you know, monasteries. Well, not monasteries. Convents, yeah. He would smuggle out nuns and barrels out of convents and, you know, get them married.

And he finally married a younger nun himself. Luther, he and his wife had the most fascinating relationship.

[54:10] They just would slam on each other all the time. He'd talk about how ugly she was. And she'd talk about how ugly he was and old and fat. But they just loved each other.

Anyway. But, yes, the Reformers rejected this idea based on, you know what their textual basis was? Some of the key texts they used were the apostolic freedom.

In other words, the right to take along a wife. 1 Corinthians 9, 5. Reference to Peter's mother-in-law in Mark chapter 1. These were some of the texts they used.

And what that did was to help in the Reform tradition to reestablish marriage as a norm. And not a less spiritual state than celibacy.

So, bottom line, we're right to see marriage as the norm. And if it is the norm, now, pastorally, we want to encourage... Now, I'm thinking of my own setting here.

[55:16] But I'm sure there's parallels. But we do want to encourage singles in this. Resistance to marriage is sometimes...

And I would say almost always among men. It is sometimes rooted in selfishness or fear. I've talked to guys in their 40, single guys, and they don't want to get married.

They come home and play video games. And so, I mean, we have... We've certainly done this at times. We've really gotten on single guys and said, Dudes, there are godly ladies in this church.

What are you doing? But having said all that, both... We need to have this category. Both Jesus and Paul affirm that there is a gift of celibacy.

But it's a gift. It's not better. It's not worse. It's just a gift. Some have it. Some don't. Marriage is the norm. It's... Then most don't. But some do.

[56:25] And Paul speaks of its advantages for the Lord. Not you have advantages to go to travel the world and go on great vacations because no one's holding you down.

No. Undivided devotion to the Lord. So, I do think at times, Reformed people...

I think we can neglect scriptural teaching on this. And sometimes, I know in my setting, it's in reaction to exaggerated views of the value of celibacy.

Especially in Roman Catholic settings. There's many Roman Catholics in America. 50 million, I think. And so, you know, Protestants...

Which, in an American setting, Protestants is just everyone who's not Catholic, basically. So, Protestants can react to that and say, you know, that's bad. Well, it is a gift here.

[57:24] And I would also say, too, pastorally, that there are many singles who want to get married.

And long to get married. Prepare to get married. And we want to care for such singles very tenderly and patiently. And pray for them and serve them.

So... Well, another important part of this chapter, verse 15, contains what is often called the Pauline exception.

Meaning the Pauline exception to Jesus' prohibitions on divorce. So, Paul mentions our Lord's prohibition on divorce in verse 10.

To the married, I give this charge. Not I, but the Lord. What does he mean by that? Paul never...

When Paul makes his own commands, he sees them as inspired.

[58:37] Chapter 14, 37. You should know that what I'm saying is a command of the Lord. And until tu theu. It's important.

When he says, I'm not saying this, the Lord's saying this. He means we've got a particular saying of Jesus that he's referring to. And he's referring here to Matthew chapter 19. To the married, I give this charge.

Not I, but the Lord. The wife... So, he's passing on. Or it could be Matthew 5 also. The wife should not separate from her husband. So, Jesus forbade divorce except in the case of...

Matthew 19. Except in the case of porneia. Right? Except in the case of porneia.

We actually... Where this comes is in Matthew 19. Jesus is answering the question... Jesus is not setting up a table and giving a marriage seminar.

[59:47] He's asking a question from the Pharisees. They were trying to trap him. They were inviting him into an intramural debate among different parties.

The school of Hillel, which was a more liberal wing versus the school of Shammai. And so, they're trying to trap him in this intramural debate.

So, again, that text shouldn't be seen as saying everything there is to say about divorce. But they say, is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any old thing, basically? And it's a reference to Deuteronomy 24, verse 1.

The phrase in Hebrew is *ervat debar*. And in some rabbinic interpretations of that, more liberal ones, school of Hillel...

A man could divorce his wife... This is true. A man could divorce his wife for ruining his breakfast. Burning his eggs. And so, they're saying, so, is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any old thing?

[60:51] And what does Jesus go? He goes back to the beginning. He goes, you guys are crazy. What God has joined together, let no man put asunder.

And then he said, so, if a man commits... Divorce his wife commits adultery, except for porneia.

Except for sexual immorality, sexual sin.

And the theological reason for that... Again, we could do a whole theology on marriage and divorce, which we're not going to go into. But I'll say a few things. The reason for porneia being the exception is because...

What happens is when God... Genesis 2.24... What God has joined together, let no man put asunder. So, what is a marriage?

A marriage is a God-forged union. Not a man-forged union. God joins people together. Right? And so, the question about divorce and remarriage really involves around...

[61:55] Well, can the marriage bond be broken? Is it conceivable for it to be broken? Some would say no. Well, Jesus would speak differently, except for porneia.

So, no, the marriage bond... So, sexual immorality in a marriage can break the marriage bond. And if the marriage bond can be broken, well, then divorce is acceptable.

It's not necessary. One person, one spouse commits adultery. It doesn't mean they have to be divorced. In fact, it's glorious and wonderful and can be incredibly redemptive and God-glorifying...

If through a painful but patient process, forgiveness is able to be extended. But it is a legitimate reason for divorce.

Now, what Paul is doing in verses 12 to 16, he's taking Jesus' teaching and addressing it to another situation.

[63:06] And in so doing, Paul does seem to give a second acceptable reason for divorce. So, woman should not separate her husband. That's what the Lord said. If she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled.

The husband should not divorce his wife. To the rest, I say, I, not the Lord. In other words, all he means by that is this is less authoritative. No, he's just saying the Lord didn't speak to this kind of situation.

And Paul is now speaking to a situation raised by them in this Greco-Roman setting, far removed from the Palestinian setting in which Jesus was ministering.

Jesus didn't address this. So, to the rest, I say that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him.

For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of the wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

[64:12] But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. And in such cases, the brother or sister is not enslaved or is not bound.

God has called you to peace. Wife, how do you know whether you will save your husband?

Husband, how do you know whether you will save your wife? So, Paul is envisioning here a fairly narrow situation, which would have been quite likely in a pagan culture to which the gospel has come.

And so, you've got the gospel comes to a city. A pagan spouse is converted. The other spouse is not.

So, what do you do there? And so, some could, you could have the thought, well, the believer will say, you know, all is new. Christ has made me new. I need a brand new start.

I need to leave this unbeliever. There also could be this perception, and it's certainly a Jewish perception, of not being defiled. I am with Christ now, and my non-believing spouse can defile me.

[65:23] And so, I need to separate. Paul says, no, don't separate. If they want to live with you, then stay with them. Believer may not initiate a divorce.

Conversion doesn't free you from marriage, which says a lot. In other words, marriage is not a subset of Christianity. Marriage finds its highest expression and deepest meaning among Christians, but it's not a subset of Christianity.

Marriage is a creation ordinance. And so, it's good when two non-believers are married, and they love each other and serve each other with common grace.

Maybe they're lost, but that's a good thing. Not just for Christians. Now, on sanctified, I was beginning to get to that.

Unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife. What's in view here is not conversion. The spouse is not sort of automatically included in the community of God. Certainly, pedo-baptism is not in view here.

[66:30] Sanctified means that the unbeliever is set apart in a unique, powerful way for Christian influence. That person, that non-believing spouse, is going to be exposed to the grace of God in the believer's life.

He's going to come under the influence of Christian love. He's going to be joined to a person who's led by the Holy Spirit. He's going to be exposed to Christian attitudes, and he's going to be exposed to the gospel.

So, that person is set aside for redemptive influence in a way other pagans are not. So, it's a very powerful statement. Obviously, Corinthians believed the opposite.

That the believer would be contaminated by the non-believer, which would be consistent with Jewish teaching. It's actually the reverse logic of what Paul argued for relative to sinners in the covenant community.

In the family, it appears, holiness is more powerful than impurity. However, verse 15, if the unbeliever divorces, then the believer is not bound.

[67:52] The believer is not under bondage. So, the primary dispute here is what Paul means when he says the brother or sister is not in bondage. It's the verb.

I put it on your outline. It's a very strong verb. Dulao. It's cognate to the noun dulas, which means slave.

So, they're not enslaved. Now, that language, not being bound, alludes to the wording of Jewish divorce documents. And Jewish divorce documents would tell a woman, you are free to remarry any man.

And so, some want to argue that, well, the believer is not bound by verse 10 and Christ's prohibition on divorce.

Some argue that it means the brother is not bound in seeking reconciliation. I don't think that makes much sense at all because the other person is left. The brother has no choice. I think the issue is being bound to the marriage.

[69:00] Thus, I do think this is a Pauline exception. If a non-believer divorces a believer, I think the marriage is free from, or the believer is free from his marriage obligations.

And what's interesting here, Paul uses, this is a perfect example of the aspect of the perfect verb. He uses a perfect tense here.

The believer is, In other words, the unbeliever is not in a bound state. In other words, he's free to remarry, or she is free to remarry.

Being bound means, especially in Jewish documents, being bound means you're still married in God's sight. And it is interesting, verse 39, and also Romans 7, too.

Both texts refer to the freedom to remarry that comes from the dissolution of a marriage. Because there are views that say, okay, a person can divorce, but they cannot remarry.

[70:20] I think if, I don't think that is theologically consistent, and I don't think it's textually supported. If you are, if divorce is, if you have a legitimate basis for divorce, it means the marriage bond is broken.

So I think with divorce, a legitimate divorce, comes the freedom to remarry. Now, the exception to that is a Christian spouse who leaves another spouse who is a Christian.

What does Paul say? She shouldn't separate. If she does, let her remain unmarried. That's not a legitimate divorce. So again, Paul is speaking into a fairly narrow situation.

One pagan, or one spouse married, a Christian, I'm sorry, one spouse not. This is nothing remotely resembling, in my own culture, incompatibility.

We just can't get along anymore. We're not made for each other. I made a mistake when I got married. No. Now, one context where this would be, in modern times, more common, I would imagine these things would already be coming to your minds, would be in fundamentalist Muslim settings and fundamentalist Hindu settings.

[71:52] So I imagine there's even broader application in your circles, perhaps, than I would be exposed to.

One thing, maybe you're not thinking this, but I just want to be clear. In a few places, Paul uses the word *coridzo* here. We translate separate. That means divorce.

Paul does not have the idea here of what we have in modern times of just kind of separation. You're not really divorced, but you're just kind of living apart for a period of time.

That's not what Paul is talking about, just to make that clear. But I think, Issachor, if one Christian spouse leaves the other Christian spouse, remains, stays celibate, that is not a legitimate grounds for divorce.

There's not been sexual immorality. And it's not the case of a non-believer leaving a believer. Those are the two grounds.

[73:05] And so, therefore, I don't think there's, it's legitimate for remarriage. I think that's what Paul is addressing in verses 10 and 11. What breaks the marriage bond is pornea.

Or, okay, let me tell you a little story. A couple, two Christians, married later in life, and one spouse, two professing Christians, one spouse, no, this is so hard.

One spouse withdrew from the other spouse. Not physically, but in every other way. They began living separate lives.

He began living a separate life. He set up different bank accounts. He, his money was his, her money was hers. He moved into a different room.

He went to work. He went out at night. He would hardly talk to her. Only on the most functional things was the, was the electric bill paid.

[74:36] No fellowship. No, utter, I have nothing to do with you. And this went on for years. They did not have sex for years. He left the church for years.

Pastors pursued him. No response for years. No, I'm a Christian. So, after years, and we're talking, we're talking close to a decade.

And his wife, godly woman, persevered, wanted to honor the marriage relationship. But it got to be so bad, and it became cruel, not physical, but cruel.

And so she came to us and said, is this, do I have grounds for a divorce? And our conclusion was, and there's more details here, but that's the big picture.

Our conclusion was, okay, this person has failed. They have failed to meet, they are not meeting any of the requirements of a spouse.

[75:54] He has, for all, I mean, they're in the same, they're under the same roof, but for all intents and purposes and in every way imaginable, except their spatial proximity, he has left.

And we have no reason to consider him a believer, every reason to consider him an unbeliever. The unbeliever gets, you know, the unbelieving spouse that Paul is speaking of, don't leave.

Now that unbelieving spouse gets to come into the temple of God's people. This guy is not doing that. He's renounced that by his actions.

He was a very passive guy. He wouldn't say things, but just by his actions, all of this was happening. He's not doing that. He wants nothing to do with his wife.

He wants nothing to do with the covenant community of God. He has, for all intents and purposes, abandoned her, left her, even though they're under the same roof, and for all intents and purposes, as far as we know, he's an unbeliever.

[76:59] So he has demonstrated over time, I mean years, a decade, and in a consistent and entrenched way, a radical refusal to maintain the

fundamental integrity of a marriage.

Therefore, so this was something we talked about a lot as pastors, and I led our pastors in a study of this. And so therefore, because of that radical refusal to maintain the fundamental integrity of a marriage, he fits verse 15.

He has left, even though he was too selfish and too passive to give her a divorce. You know why he wouldn't give her a divorce? You know why he wouldn't initiate a divorce?

He was lazy, and his family's Catholic. And his family would have been angry at him. But we decided, and this is, guys, you're going to face situations that are just heart-rending and Bible-searching.

It's like, what do we have here? But that was an occasion where we put everything together and realized it would be wrong, it would be ham-fisted, ham-fisted exegesis to say, well, he's still in the apartment in his bedroom, but so he hasn't left.

[78:26] No, he has left. And he's a non-believer. In other words, if he, look at verse 15 or 12, she consents to live with him.

That's the qualification, right? If the spouse is a non-believer, but she consents to live with him or he consents to live with her. Consents to live with her means a consent to do life with her, to abide with her, to experience life together as a married couple.

Do you see? And that guy had refused it for years. He was not consenting to live with her. And it would have been wrong exegesis to say, well, he's still under the same roof in a different room, not saying a word to her, being cruel to her, keeping his money to himself, not supporting her at all. Her money's her money. Although he was fired from his prior job for stealing from the firm, and she has reason to believe he was stealing from her too.

So, I mean, the details go on and on and on. Finally, let me mention this, and then we'll take a break.

[79:47] On chapter 7, I want to say something about chapter 17 and following. Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him and to which God has called him.

This whole idea of remaining as you are. Paul says it a few times. Verse 20, each one should remain as you are. Remain in the condition in which you were called.

So, three times he repeats this. Verses 17, verse 20, verse 24. Remain in the condition in which you were called. It's echoed, actually, in verse 26.

In other words, one's position at the time of conversion. So, what's going on here? Well, I think what's going on is basically this.

Conversion doesn't give you a right to a change in life status. Becoming a Christian doesn't give you a get out of jail card.

[80:56] That's not going to translate, is it, Mike? It does? Okay. A get out of jail free card? Yeah. It, it, it, just because you're a Christian means you can't escape a fallen world.

You can't rebel against the limitations society places upon you. You don't automatically have the right to move out of your place in the social structure.

In other words, you become a Christian, you thrive as a Christian in that situation. You don't overthrow everything about your life.

Now, it should not be viewed as some kind of fatalism. Paul is not saying, well, the moment you're saved, you're stuck. Just be happy. That's not what he says.

Verse, uh, verse 21. If a slave can gain his freedom, do it. Praise God. So he's not saying you're stuck. You don't have to stay in the exact same circumstances.

[82:01] But the point, it's an encouraging point. The point is, he's reassuring believers that don't, just because you're, because you're, you become a Christian, don't be troubled about your circumstances.

Don't be troubled about your present state in life. Focus your attention on serving Christ, whatever your circumstances are. And realize that your new relationship with Christ is your ultimate and most important identity.

So verse 22, if you're a slave, don't worry about it. Because that's not really who you are. Who you are is, you're totally free in Christ. If you're free, if you're a free man, don't glory in that.

That's not your, don't take pride in that. That's not your ultimate identity. You're Christ's slave. That's your ultimate identity. It's similar to James 1. You know, let the humble man glory in his high position.

Let the rich man glory in his humiliation. So are you poor? Then how much joy you should have knowing that you're rich in Christ.

[83:16] Are you rich? Then recognize how worthless your riches are in Christ. And use your riches for Christ. That's James' point. So it's very wise counsel in dealing with converts from different socioeconomic places.

Now the burden behind all this is in verse 29. The appointed time, this is what I mean brothers, the appointed time has grown very short.

He doesn't mean that Jesus is coming back very, very soon. We know that. No. It is that the time has been shortened.

That's the way to take it. Know this, the appointed time has been shortened. In other words, and with Christ, an eschatological process has been initiated.

We have been thrust forward into the last chapter of history. Since Christ has come and died and risen and reigns at God's right hand, the time before the end has been shortened.

[84:35] We're in the last era of salvation history. So it's in this sense that the return of the Lord and the end of this present order, it is impending.

It doesn't mean it's imminent like it's going to happen any second, but it is impending. It's now an ever-present possibility. It's always hanging over us. We don't know.

And so, Paul's argument here is Christians should live in light of this. In Christ, Christ's coming and the new age he has inaugurated and the new covenant existence of Christians as the new temple of God and having the Holy Spirit, Satan, I mean, all wrapped together, all these different strands of biblical data, Satan being bound, Revelation 20, the gospel going forward.

everything in life for a Christian needs to be recalibrated and considered in light of this. We live in an incredible era of church history.

So, Paul unpacks this in verses 29 and 31. Look at what he says. The appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none and those who mourn as though they were not mourning and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing and those who buy as though they had no goods and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it for the present form of this world is passing away.

[86:16] So, the Lord's impending return completely inverts, turns upside down the values of believers.

In other words, things that are absolute for people in the world become relatively unimportant for believers.

So, Christians should live as if not. So, are you married? Well, in a sense, you live as if not.

Now, he doesn't mean marriage is unimportant. It doesn't mean you get divorced. He's already said no. It doesn't mean you don't fulfill your obligations. Husbands, love your wife and Christ loves the church.

It doesn't... He wrote that, right? It doesn't mean marriage is not a glorious institution that points to Christ. It just means that for us, marriage is not the ultimate reality.

[87:23] Things that make you cry, we live as if not. Things that bring us joy, we live as if not. In other words, joys and tragedies, they touch us.

Of course they touch us. But they're not the ultimate category. So something, a tragedy happens that makes me mourn, I mourn. I'm not cold, but I also know that it's not the ultimate, it's not the end of my life, it's not the end of the world, it's not the ultimate thing.

Things that bring me joy, I enjoy them. God has given us all things freely to enjoy. Praise God. We have fun together, we enjoy. Yes, but that's not the ultimate value.

I don't live for pleasure. I live for Christ. Material goods, sure, we buy and sell, but we do so as if not.

Because, so, what I wear, what I drive, where I live, they're not my highest value. So for the believer, a massive as if not is suspended over all the categories bound up with this present world

order.

[88:41] You see? And this is all related to, I'll mention this, this difficult phrase in verse 26, I think that in view of the present distress, it is good for a person to remain as it is.

The views, the opinions on that phrase are many. Some, some would say the parousia, the return of Christ.

And those who hold that would say, and Paul had it wrong. So a lot of people say that. More liberal scholars, more liberal commentators say that.

No, Paul thought Jesus was coming back any second and he was wrong. I think that's completely wrong. That can't be the meaning. The word points to present events, not future ones.

The present distress. Some would say a crisis in the church. In other words, an outbreak of persecution. And this is Paul's response.

[89:52] Well, there's nothing in this letter that points to crisis or persecution. And Paul doesn't give this counsel to any church, even ones facing persecution.

So I don't think that's legit. One view that a man named Bruce Winter has made a very careful case of and it's, he was a New Testament scholar but especially a scholar of ancient Corinth.

British scholar. But he's made a very careful case that what Paul is speaking of as a social crisis, in particular, a famine. And there was a, he documented, there was a massive grain shortage in AD 51 in this part of the Roman Empire.

And in the colonies, a grain shortage would have had a massive impact, especially on the poor. And even if Corinth's prosperity as a city, and we mentioned that, protected it, inflation, inflation would have been rampant.

And it still would have decimated the poor. So some would say what he's talking about is this famine is going on now. I think what's in view here, I think what Paul has in view is an eschatological idea.

[91:28] I think the present is the new situation brought about by Christ, by this dawning of the eschatological age.

Christ is risen, the eschatological down payment of the Spirit has been sent, the final scene in redemptive history has begun. I think that's what Paul is speaking of.

That's in keeping with Paul's argument in verses 29 and following. Now, I do think you could keep my view together with the famine view.

It may well be that people were under great stress from some social crisis, or a famine, but I think that would have been seen by Paul as a concrete manifestation, evidence of the eschatological question mark that stands over against the supposed stability and security and permanence of the present world order.

Somewhat similar to the birth pangs and the groaning of creation that Paul mentions in Romans chapter 8. Remember when Romans is talking about that we're experiencing the birth pains.

[92:48] Now, those are probably physical things, earthquakes and wars and things like that, but Paul sees those as signs of the eschatological situation we find ourselves in.

And so Paul's eschatological framing of the entire marriage issue then becomes critical for us in every area of life.

When we recognize, we're supposed to recognize as Christians, the nature of the age in which we live, if we embrace this teaching, it's not about just marriage, but we're going to be far less vulnerable to being tied to this world.

We're going to be far less vulnerable to being discouraged or downcast because of relationship hardship or because of financial hardship or because of career setbacks.

These things aren't ultimate. They're not bad. They're part of our lives. We pursue them, but they're not ultimate. So one of the things I so love about this chapter is it, the inaugurated, Paul helps us see that the inaugurated kingdom of God, because of what Christ has done, touches and informs every category of our lives.

[94:12] Nothing is untouched by the gospel. Well, that's what we'll do on chapter 7.