

The importance of prayer in a relationship

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 September 2022

Preacher: Francis Dalrymple-Hamilton

[0 : 00] or the sadness of having people in your family, which we all do, who do not share your faith. And in the main, I'll deal with that next week.

But this week, I want to look at the first ten verses of 1 Corinthians chapter 7. First nine verses. Now, concerning the matters you wrote to me about, it is well for a man not to touch a woman. But because of the temptation to immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband.

The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does.

Likewise, the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does. Do not refuse one another, except perhaps by agreement for a season, that you may devote yourself to prayer, and then come together again, lest Satan tempt you through lack of self-control.

[1 : 31] I say this by way of confession, not of command. I wish that all of you were as I myself am, but each one has his own special gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.

To the unmarried and the widows, I say that it is well for them to remain single as I do. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry.

For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion. Amen. May the Lord bless us that reading be to his praise and to his glory. Now, before we get into this, I want to say something about 1 Corinthians as a whole.

There's actually three different bits to it. The first bit is not in chapter 1. The first bit is in chapters 5 and 6.

Because in chapters 5 and 6, he refers to a letter he's written, which we don't have, which was prior to 1 Corinthians. And the reason he refers to it is that they fail to understand what he was talking about, and he seeks to correct their understanding.

[2 : 49] When we come to the next bit, which is chapters 1 to 4, you find that chapters 1 to 4 are actually a sermon, which is based on Jeremiah chapter 9, quoted at the end of chapter 1.

He who boasts, let him boast in the Lord. And this deals with one of the problems that the Corinthians had. They had this thing about boasting about what they had and the ministries they had and what they could do and so on.

And Paul is saying to them, you're completely wrong. Because what you've actually ended up doing is boasting that you belong to Paul or Apollos or Peter or Christ.

So when we get to chapter 7, he's writing in response to a letter that they have written to him.

And each of the topics is introduced by the word concerning. Concerning the matters about which you wrote.

[3 : 57] That deals with chapter 7, which deals with marriage and associated issues. The word again comes in chapter 8, and there the theme is concerning food that is offered to idols.

In other words, it's a question of conscience whether you take this or not. And that goes on to chapter 10. In chapter 12, you get concerning spiritual gifts.

That goes on to chapter 14. And then in chapter 16, you get concerning collections for the saints. So all of these issues are being dealt with in this particular letter.

And it's important to note that when we get to chapter 7 on, he actually quotes some of what they've said to him. And indeed, when we go to the first chapter, sorry, verse 1, it is well for a man, and your Bibles may say not to have sex with a woman, but because of the temptation to immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.

Now this verse that's there, right at the beginning, is not Paul's opinion. It is the opinion of the Corinthians. And so he's responding to this and trying to show them that what they've said so far is

wrong.

[5 : 40] Now, they had requested teaching from him on this very subject. And as I'm saying, he's quoting a statement that they have made to him.

And throughout this chapter, and certainly in chapter 8, there are lots of quotations. And some of the versions now put these quotations in inverted commas.

Now, we have to realize that what we are talking about in this chapter is a cultural situation which existed in the first century.

We are now 2,000 years from that, but what's happening is that Paul, as the pastor, is dealing with this pastoral problem. And in the culture that the Corinthians existed in, they took the view, and this may shock you, but it's nevertheless true, that if someone was married, you didn't use your wife for sexual relations, you went to a prostitute.

Now, that is strange, but nevertheless, that is the situation. The reason for the situation was that they had absorbed false teaching.

[7 : 01] In the first century, there was a heresy which was called Gnosticism. And Gnosticism, amongst other things, taught that there was nothing you could do with the sin problem that was in your body.

You just had to put up with it. So here is Paul taking this on board and saying, it's wrong. And so he says this, again, another verse in the pastoral letters in 1 Timothy 4.

He says this, The Spirit expressly says that in later times, some will depart from the faith by giving heed to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons who forbid marriage and enjoy abstinence from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. It's possible that what's happening there is that the apostle has quoted a word of prophecy. But whether it is or not, it's irrelevant. Because what he's telling you is that if you believe it's wrong to marry, you're wrong.

And of course, his authority for saying all of this is the Old Testament. For example, in Genesis 2, verse 18, then the Lord God said, It is not good that man should be alone.

[8 : 45] I will make a helper fit for him. So from that statement in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2, the divine approval is given to marriage.

So if you are teaching the reverse of that, you're not in line with the word of God. Now, we in this generation, we are also subject to heresies of a far different kind.

What we have to do is to seek the biblical foundation and correct them so that we understand what the situation is.

He goes on in verse 2. Because of the temptation to immorality, or indeed the temptation to sin, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.

Now, what he's also saying is that with this word immorality, in the original, it's in the plural.

[9 : 55] That indicates to us there's got to be more than one case of immorality which are known about within the courts of the Corinthian church. And so he proposes this action.

Each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. This is the norm where your pastors, elders, ordinary members, deacons, or whoever.

This is the norm that God has supplied for his people and it is the way of safety and blessing. So, there were, undoubtedly, a great number of problems in the Corinthian church.

And Paul is attempting to sort these out. And one of the problems that they had was resistance to what was being taught by him.

Now, it is a fact that there is an extra canonical letter which was written by Clement, the then bishop of Rome, somewhere about AD 90.

[11 : 05] and in that letter he indicates some of the same problems that Paul had been talking about. So, they never learned the lesson.

They never realized that they had to submit to the teaching of Paul or anyone else. So, it is an object lesson. And so, he says in 1 Corinthians 10, 31, whatever you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

So, that's the first one. A temptation to sin in the form of immorality. As far as the Christian believer is concerned, we have a great example in the Lord Jesus Christ.

because we read in Hebrews 4 and 16 that he was tempted in all points as we are but without sin. He understands. He's been there. Let's think about this escape from this temptation. Verses 3 and 4.

[12 : 22] The husband should give to his wife our conjugal rights and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not rule over her own body but the husband does. Likewise, the husband does not rule over his own body but the wife does.

So, he's continuing to give positive teaching. He's saying that conjugal rights are not to be denied either way.

So, what does he mean? in the original it's a word which actually means debt or something that is due that is being used with a reference to this problem.

And in the Lord's Prayer you get this word debt again. Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Now, what that's doing in that verse is picking up some of the teaching you would have got in Judaism because in Judaism it was taught that if you sinned against God you incurred a debt and that debt had to be met and forgiven.

[13 : 39] but that's not what's being spoken here. He's coming to the question of conjugal rights.

Now, according to the world conjugal rights exist in sexual relations but that's not what the Bible has to say.

The Bible has to talk about companionship aid support encouragement it speaks of man and wife having a mutual prayer ministry a mutual reading of the word a mutual worship of God a mutual testimony a mutual ministry that is what is meant by conjugal rights.

Yes, sexual relations comes into it but it's not the only thing. again back to the book of Genesis chapter 2 verses 24 to 25 therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and the two become one flesh.

The man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. So here we are these pair are in a relationship of total trust to one another and that is what he's advocating in these verses.

Now the fact the aspect of this blessedness that he's trying to teach them about they had missed out on it by being led about this false teaching about marriage and he wants to talk about this picture of a physical and spiritual union that ought to exist between a man and his wife and he does talk about it when he writes to the Ephesians.

[15 : 44] So in Ephesians 5 we read this this mystery is a profound one and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

However let each one of you love his wife as himself and let the wife see that she respects her husband. Now when asked what the greatest commandment of the law is Jesus said this this is quoting Deuteronomy 6.4 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

this is the great and the first commandment and a second is like it and that second is taken from Leviticus 19.18 you shall love your neighbor as yourself on these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.

So taking this second commandment you shall love your neighbor as yourself he applies it with respect to the problem and the marriage relationship.

it's this teaching that will revitalize and reinvigorate their marriage relationship. Now listen to what he says earlier in Ephesians 5 even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies and he goes on and says that no one ever hates himself but he loves and cherishes his own body.

[17 : 35] So here we are. The application of this second commandment you shall love your neighbor as yourself in this case your wife.

That is the source for this whole problem to be corrected. I want to go now and finalize by talking about this prayer against this temptation.

Verse 5 we read do not refuse one another except perhaps by agreement for a season that you may devote yourself to prayer but then come together again lest Satan tempt you through lack of self control.

So the whole answer to this problem is a correct understanding of what God's word says prayer. And the second thing we need is this prayer.

Prayer. Not only does he teach that abstinence is not necessary the only exception to that is this rule for prayer.

[18 : 49] Now if we're emphasizing the need for prayer in the marriage situation he is producing a rule which is this that the husband and wife who pray together will stay together.

Not just something that's conveniently said but that's what it is. And that's what the subject of this prayer ministry is.

The burden of prayer would be in Corinth for the ongoing success of the church and its ministry especially as it has been led by Paul the pastor and teacher and so he counsels in the Ephesians once again chapter 6 pray at all times in the spirit with all prayer and supplication to that end keep alert with all perseverance making supplication for all the saints and also for me that utterance may be given me in the opening of my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains that I might declare it boldly as I ought to speak prayer we have to keep alert in every situation with prayer husband and wife that pray together will know nothing less than the blessing of almighty

God now he's also saying that prayer is to be made for me as you saw in that context but he says something else you may devote yourself to prayer and then come together again lest Satan tempt you through lack of self control this is to prevent you or anyone else falling in to temptation temptation the source of this temptation comes from Satan himself and you what you have to do is to see this is to go to Genesis 3 it opens with the words the serpent was more subtle than any of the other beasts which the Lord God had created and the serpent said to the woman has God said as soon as you start to listen you've lost the battle because believe it or not he's still active and he still says these things he wants to place doubt on what the commands and the standards of God are and he will always find opportunities for idle hearts and hands to fall but there is a prayer which is contained in the Lord's prayer the final petition says lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil the final clause deliver us from evil is also rendered as deliver us from the evil one and that prayer is still very much effective so the importance of prayer for the married couple it's equally important for the single person because he goes on in verse seven and says this

[22 : 53] I wish that all whereas I myself am that is celibate but each has his own special gift from God one of one kind and one of another now it is the case that when he writes this to the Corinthians he is celibate but Paul as an ordained rabbi would have been married once and perhaps the wife has died and he remains celibate so he has got something to say to the married couple and the teaching he has given is relating to prayer but it's equally applicable to him in his single state so he's dealt with all of these problems in a new way he's referred his hearers to the early chapters of the book of Genesis where they will find what God has ordained and the way that they should follow and then he goes on and says right towards the end

I say this all of this by way of concession not of command for each one has his gift from God one of one kind and one of another so whatever state we find ourselves in the way forward in whatever state we're in or whatever blessing we seek is the concept of prayer prayer and more prayer taking into context what God promises in his word and God has never failed in keeping his promise what we're called to do is to believe it and to pray it amen my lord bless us what's been said may be to his praise and to his glory thank you almighty god and heavenly father we thank you for your great presence we thank you for the presence of the holy spirit we thank you for the presence of jesus who said where two or three are gathered there am i in the midst and we would seek to take that presence with us and spread it abroad and believe that you are able to do exceeding abundantly more than we could ever ask or think for jesus sake amen