

Called to a Life of Holiness

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: 11 September 2022

Preacher: Francis Dalrymple-Hamilton

[0 : 00] Good morning. I turn you to, again, 1 Corinthians chapter 7, beginning to read at verse 8. And there's another reading from 1 Peter 3, once we've read this one. 1 Corinthians 7, verse 8. To the unmarried and the widows, I say to them 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. To the married I give charge, not I but the Lord, that the wife should not separate from her husband. But if she does, let her remain single or else reconcile to her husband. And the husband should not divorce his wife. To the rest I say, not the Lord.

[1 : 15] But as it is, they are holy.

If the unbelieving partner decides to separate, let it be so. In such a case, the brother or sister is not bound. For God has called us to peace.

Wife, how do you know whether you will save your husband? Husband, how do you know whether you will save your wife? And if you turn to 1 Peter chapter 3, and it's the first, it's actually just the first verse.

Likewise, you wives, be submissive to your husband, so that some, though they do not obey the word, may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, when they see with reverence the holiness of your manner of life.

Amen. God bless those. These readings may be to his praise and to his glory. This builds on what I was saying last week. And in this chapter, he's answering a letter.

[3 : 03] Which letter? He's quoted right at the beginning of the chapter. And the quotation is that it is better for a man not to have sex with a woman.

This is not Paul's opinion. It is, in fact, their opinion. And his answer to it is the Christian marriage. Christian marriage, in its setting of mutual support, of its setting of mutual worship, understanding, prayer, witness, and testimony.

That's the answer. But here we go on and we look at something else. And so he says, To the unmarried and the widows, I say it is well for them to remain single as I do, but if they cannot do that, they should marry, etc.

So, what is all this about? First of all, he's talking about his own state, of his bachelor state. I wish that all were as I myself am.

[4 : 14] To the unmarried and the widows, I say it is well for them to remain single as I do. Now, from this statement in his own biography, he's clearly saying that he's not married at this time.

But the fact is that that doesn't mean that that was always the case. For example, in chapter 9, verse 5, he says, Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a wife, as the other apostles and brothers of the Lord and Peter?

Most New Testament scholars take the view that Paul was a rabbi, and his writings would certainly prove that. It's most certainly the case that he was married, since it was compulsory for every rabbi to be married.

But this time, he's now a widower. This is only important to stress this, because he himself is living a celibate life in which he devotes himself to the service of God.

And he gives these reasons why all of this should be. There are three reasons in the chapter. Why he's now saying what he's saying.

[5 : 33] And in verse 26, he says, I'm saying this in view of the present distress. Now, if we go into Roman history, the year in which this was written was the year of four emperors, one after another.

So it was an uncertain time. And then he goes on in verse 29, the appointed time has grown very short.

And in verse 31, the form of this world is passing away. So what he's actually talking about here, given the unsettled state in the world, it's because of the Lord's soon return.

But of course, because the Lord is coming soon, does not mean that any of the commands of Jesus are to be set aside. And so he goes on in verses 10 and 11.

To the married, I give charge, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not separate from her husband, but if she does, let her remain single, or else be reconciled to her husband.

[6 : 53] And the husband should not divorce his wife. Now this statement, I give charge, not I, but the Lord.

What he means is, he's now referring people to the teaching of Jesus, which is found in the Gospel of Mark. And this is on the topic of divorce.

Because you see, if you read this chapter and these verses that deal with this problem of having an unmarried, an unbelieving person in your family, the reaction of some of the Corinthians was to file for divorce.

And he's saying, that's not true. This is not the way to go about it. You'll never win them by doing that. Jesus said to them, from the hardness of your heart, Moses wrote this commandment.

You find the commandment in Deuteronomy 24, which makes the provision of a book or a record of divorce. From the beginning of creation, God made them male and female.

[8 : 06] And for this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.

Thus understood, Jesus is teaching that there is no divorce possible for either a man or a woman.

So in Mark 10, verses 11 and 12, we read, whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her.

And if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery. Now, one of the things you have to realize is that this statement that you get in the Gospel of Mark, also in Matthew, differs sharply from the prevailing attitude and law in Judaism of Jesus' time.

There were two schools of thought in Judaism. One was the school of Shammai and the other was the school of Hillel. It doesn't matter if you don't remember these.

But Shammai was the more rigorous and Hillel was the more liberal. But neither of these agreed with the teaching of Jesus, who in his absolute provision against divorce was challenging or rewriting the law in Deuteronomy 24.

[9 : 35] So what is the Apostle saying? That despite the Lord's soon return, we are still called to a holiness of life.

So now, having said all that, he now turns in a different direction. Verses 12 to 13. To the rest I say, not the Lord, 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. So, here we are talking about something that's entirely different.

And what is being said here is that the faith, the person in the marriage who has faith, has the ability to minister to the one who does not have faith.

And so right at the end of this section, which we'll consider shortly, we read, wife, how do you know whether you will save your husband? Husband, how do you know whether you will save your wife?

[10 : 51] So he's again restating something that we find in Mark and Matthew 19 on the teaching of divorce. But here there's something different comes in, and that something different is the possible salvation of the unbelieving partner.

So, the reason he's saying this is that the fact that the unbelieving partner does not have faith is not a motivation for divorce.

It's clear that the Corinthians were quite mixed up in what they thought. A mixed marriage in this sense is a marriage where one partner believes and the other does not.

But what if one of the partners is not prepared to stay? And he covers that in verse 15. If the unbelieving partner wishes to separate, let it be so.

In such a case, the brother or sister is not bound. The verb that's used here means to be separated in case of divorce.

[12 : 01] What he's actually saying is if at the end of the day the unbelieving partner wishes to go, then let it be so. Now, when he goes on, he goes another one.

I give charge here, not I, but the Lord. That's what he said previously. Teaching, quoting the teaching of Jesus on divorce.

But in this section he says the exact opposite. To the rest I say, not the Lord. So this teaching that we're getting here is in line coming straight from Paul.

And it's purely for those who are either completely of the house of Israel or indeed the Christian house of faith. And what he's saying is that these convictions he has are based on a revelation that God has given him.

In such a case, the brother or sister is not bound. Now, in Romans chapter 2 and in chapter 7, he talks about the wife being bound to the husband by law as long as the husband is alive.

[13:28] And that's what he's talking about here. So when he comes to the question of can the innocent party remarry, he doesn't give an answer to that.

Although Martin Luther took the view that it did. It gave the innocent party the right to remarry. In point of fact, what he's actually advocating now is an atmosphere of peace and reverence.

He goes on and says, God has called us to peace. separation is not the order of the day as far as marriage is concerned, whether there is one partner in it who believes or whether they both believe. And so this business of God has called us to peace brings back a very familiar rabbinic expression, which they were always advocating for the sake of the ways of peace.

That was the basis of their teaching. Now I come to the third bit, which is the challenge to the marital state.

[14:39] Wife, how do you know whether you will save your husband? Husband, how do you know whether you will save your wife? So this is a challenge.

And it's a challenge he wants to put before the believing partner in a marriage. This is an evangelical challenge.

How do you know whether you will save your husband? Husband, how do you know whether you will save your wife? It's an evangelical challenge. But what's the ground of it?

Listen to what he says in verse 14. The unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is consecrated through her husband.

Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. This word consecrated, it comes from the verb that we would normally translate as to sanctify, to purify, or to cleanse.

[15:47] And right at the beginning of 1 Corinthians in verse 2, he writes, to the church of God, which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints.

What he's saying there is this. In spite of the fact that the Corinthians had previous sins, and in spite of the fact they had mixed ideas about a whole lot of issues, God has set them apart for service in the Christian gospel and declared them to be holy.

So if we say that the unbelieving partner is consecrated through the believing partner, that does not mean that that partner is saved.

what it teaches is that the unbelieving husband or wife has been brought into the sphere of a believing atmosphere so that the possibility exists of their salvation.

Now, if we turn to Romans 11, where he's talking about the relationship of Israel to the gospel, and talking about the fact that Israel has failed to accept the gospel, he comes to some similar concepts.

[17:18] He talks about the root to being holy, and so are the branches. This chapter is all about the failure of the house of Israel to embrace the faith of the gospel.

But he's saying something wonderful. He's saying that because of the promises that were made to the patriarchs, the house of Israel is still considered to be holy, and so in that sense, they can experience salvation.

At the beginning of that section, in Romans 9, he talks about the covenant, they are the Israelites. To them belong the covenants. They are the enemies of the gospel, but they're brought into the sphere of God's covenant.

And the conclusion that Paul gives to all of this, all Israel will be saved. And that's exactly what he's got in mind here.

the unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is consecrated through her husband. They've not yet experienced salvation, but they've been brought within the sphere of the covenant of grace that they might experience salvation.

[18:41] This is the point of what he's trying to get across. He's trying to present them with an evangelical opportunity. How do you know whether you will save your husband or save your wife?

What he doesn't say in this section is how this is to be achieved. And how it's to be achieved is in these verses I read, or the verse I read from 1 Peter chapter 3.

Likewise, you wives, be submissive to your husband, so that some, though they do not obey the word, may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, when they see with reverence the holy manner of your life.

So, according to Peter, the thing that's important in all of this is the holiness of the believing partner's life.

Now, I've translated it slightly differently. that you find it in your Bibles for this reason. It literally says, with reverence.

[19 : 56] So, the idea that's contained in that verse is this, that when the unbelieving partner looks on your life, faith, reverence, is given birth in their minds and their hearts.

unbelieving, that was D.L. Moody who once said, the Christian is the world's Bible. And he went on to say, the world does not read the Bible, but the world looks on your life.

And that's exactly what Peter is saying here. There is a great opportunity in all of this to see it in its correct context and to see that while there might be sadness, that the unbelieving partner, whoever that partner might be, might not have your faith and mine.

There is the glorious possibility that they will have. That is what he's talking about here. The thing are doing in him, the first three verses of Behold the Lamb.

Behold the Lamb who bears our sins array. slain for us. And we remember the promise made that all who come to and fail find forgiveness at the cross.

[21 : 52] So we share in this bread of life and we drink of his sacrifice as a sign of our bonds of peace around the table of the King.

The body of our Savior Jesus Christ born for you. Eat and remember who has healed the death that brings us life paid the price to make us one.

So we share in this bread of life and we drink of his sacrifice as a sign of our bonds of love around this table of the care.

The blood that cleanses every stain of sin shed for you.

Drink and remember ye drink this cup that all may enter in to receive the life of God.

[23 : 21] so we share in this bread of life and we drink of his sacrifice as a sign of our bonds of grace around the table of the King.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. significance from that day on. So as we come to celebrate once again, we want to see the richness of this memorial. We want to see the blessing it contains. And we want to take that blessing and share it with others. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

Amen. For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you. The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread. And when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

[25 : 34] In the same way, after supper, he took the cup, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this whenever you drink it in remembrance of me.

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. So then whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthily manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.

Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. Amen. Amen.

On my life, Jesus took the bread. He broke it in the dead. This is my body. It is broken with me. I'll be able to come forward and go. Here we pray. Amen.

[26 : 56] Thank you.

Thank you.