

# 1 Corinthians 7

*By Ron Boatwright*

Here in 1 Corinthians 7, contrary to what many people hope, Paul did not change or add to what Jesus taught on marriage, divorce, & remarriage. In 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 we read, "Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: a wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife." Married couples are not to divorce. If there is a divorce, the only alternative is clear: either reconciliation or remain unmarried. A third option namely remarriage is not authorized.

As we see in Matthew 5:32, 19:9, Mark 10:11-12, Luke 16:18, and Romans 7:2-3, when divorced people remarry they commit adultery on a continuing basis. The Bible says an adulterer cannot go to heaven (1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Galatians 5:19-21).

In 1 Corinthians 7:15, "But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is **not under bondage** in such cases. But God has called us to peace." In this verse we have a believer married to an unbeliever. Here "not under bondage" is misconstrued, by those looking for a loophole, to mean that if the unbeliever divorces a believer, then the believer is free to remarry. This is false. This is not what it says. Authority to remarry if an unbeliever departs is not given here or anywhere else in the Bible. It is only wishful thinking. There is no Biblical authority for the deserted believer to remarry, even though it is assumed by many. Those who remarry without Biblical authority are living in continuous adultery because they are still bound to their first spouse as long as that spouse lives (1 Corinthians 7:39).

The teaching here is the Christian is not under bondage of having to give up his salvation and forsake Christ to please his spouse. A Christian must not abandon Christ simply to hold on to his unbelieving mate. The loyalty of the Christian belongs first to Christ. To such bondage Christians do not have to submit to in order to hold on to their marriage. Marriage is not a slave/master relationship. Divorce and remarriage are not under discussion anywhere in 1 Corinthians 7. In all 40 verses of this chapter the only authority for remarriage is given in verses 9 & 39 and that is only in case of the death of a spouse.

There is a vast difference between the marriage bond and being in bondage as a slave. The noun and verb forms of the Greek word "douloo", which is translated bondage and means slavery, are found 133 times in the New Testament. It never refers to the marriage bond. Bondage means to

serve as a bonds slave. Man's wishful thinking cannot change bondage (slavery) into meaning a marriage bond. Let us not pervert the word of God in an effort to try to justify those in an adulterous marriage. If we do we will lose our own souls.

But what are the options of the deserted believer? As Paul has already stated in verses 10 & 11, "Now to the married...But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband." There is no Biblical authority for the deserted believer to remarry, even though it is assumed by many. She is to either to "remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband". Those who remarry without Biblical authority are living in adultery because they are still bound to their first spouse (Romans 7:2-3, 1 Corinthians 7:39).

Those who live in adultery will be lost eternally (1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Galatians 5:19). Those who teach people that they can remain in an adulterous marriage should ask themselves if they think they can really be saved themselves while teaching other people to remain in conditions that will cause their souls to be lost in the eternal fires of Hell. This is very serious. Souls are at stake. In the surrounding context (verses 12-14, 16) Paul is urging a person who is married to an unbeliever not to abandon his unbelieving mate upon becoming a Christian.

We must be very careful that we do not teach anything God has not authorized, because we shall receive a stricter judgment. We read in James 3:1, "My brethren let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment." We will be held accountable for what we teach and for what we fail to teach. We must not be afraid to teach what the Bible says and we must not teach what it does not teach. If we teach people something different than what the Bible says about adultery, in trying to console them in their lost adulterous state, and they follow our teaching, then they will be lost in the eternal fires of Hell and we will be there with them.

Baptism does not make adultery into a virtue. There are those who are looking for a loophole in order to justify adulterous marriages. They say that in verses 17, 20, & 24 where it is stated, "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called", that when one is baptized if he is in an adulterous marriage then he can remain in it with the Lord's blessing. This is not what these three verses are saying. This is only wishful thinking.

Here Paul is presenting three different honorable situations that in no way are sinful. 1) In the first situation in verses 12-17 there is a believer who is

married to an unbeliever. Paul is saying to abide in this marriage. There is nothing sinful about abiding in a marriage with an unbeliever. 2) In the second situation in verses 18-20 we have some who were circumcised and some who were uncircumcised. There is no sin involved in either being circumcised or uncircumcised. Again Paul is saying not to change things but to abide as you are whether circumcised or uncircumcised. 3) In the third situation in verses 21-23 there were some slaves and some freemen who became Christians. There is no sin involved if one is a slave or if he is a freeman. Again Paul says to abide in this calling as a slave or a freeman and continue to be a Christian.

In no way are any of these three situations sinful. But to use this to try to justify staying in an adulterous marriage makes a mockery out of what the Bible says. People need to be very careful and not twist the scriptures in order to try to make them say what they want them to say. We are warned in 2 Peter 3:16 that those who are "unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." To teach and advise that baptism makes an adulterous marriage into a sanctified marriage will cause many people to be lost including those who teach this false doctrine.

1 Corinthians 7:39 says, "A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord." Here we see that one is bound to their spouse until that spouse dies. So if one marries someone else while their first spouse is living, then they are still bound to their first spouse while married to the second spouse and this constitutes the continuing sin of adultery. An adulterer cannot go to Heaven. The sin of adultery will cause many who claim to be Christians to be lost. Such a tragedy. We do not have to wait until Judgment Day to know what God is going to do with adulterers. People must start paying attention as to what God has said if they really expect to go to Heaven. The sin of adultery will cause many who are Christians to be lost.