

Sermon Notes

Marriage & Warfare

1 Corinthians 7:1-7

August 30, 2015

Introduction: *Marriage & Warfare*

Paul dealt with the issues of *porneia* in the Church of Corinth by pointing to marriage. While we have seen some of what the Bible teaches about marriage, there's still more. There are battles going on...

Battles about marriage—

Battles within marriage—

There are battles *within* due to our own sin, the sins of our spouse, and the sins of others. These sins bring about many other battles *within* marriage. Sadly, in the experience of many, marriage is known only as a warzone; a place of carnage, destruction, and much debris. Seemingly, it's all some have ever known.

Battles engaged by marriage—

Marriage is also designed to engage in certain types of warfare. When there is a marriage, the work of the Lord is present, and there will be some level of opposition from the outside. We have already seen some of this. There has been a steady assault on marriage because of the clear testimony of marriage; that it is a declaration of Christ and His Church. However, there are other areas where battles occur—where there is an engagement going on—and those who are married need to be aware, alert, and active, and this is what Paul addresses now. This has to do with our bodies and the physical union of intimacy in marriage.

The Corinthian Context

Amidst the many problems in the Corinthian Church, some were slipping down the sexual slide into all kinds of such sin. Others were going in the other direction entirely. One group was very active, and the other group decided that they wouldn't go near that, and so they wouldn't even "touch."

They wrote, and Paul is now answering:

7:1— "Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me, you wrote [Paul quotes them], 'It is good for a man to not touch a woman.'"

7:2— "Nevertheless, because of (due to) sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband."

The Lord's answer is that we are not to go in either direction. The subject of marriage and physical intimacy between a husband and wife are now present, and this is presented most honorably and discreetly.

"Let marriage be held in honor among all, and the bed undefiled" (Heb. 13:4).

Christianity is not prudish, fearful, or gnostic. The Lord is aware—and has made us aware—of the "problem of evil/pain" as well as "the problem of pleasure."

The tendency toward "Gnosticism" has been lurking for a long time, and will usually dress itself up in the garments of "being spiritual." Paul warns Timothy that some will show up and attempt to sound very spiritual. They will be those who are busy warning others about the flesh and that which pertains to the flesh. They will do such things as "forbid to marry" and offer commands about "staying away from certain foods." Both of these are rather fleshy, and very bodily activities. Paul's answer: these are good, created by God, and are to be received with gratitude (1 Timothy 4:3-4).

The Lord will not allow this kind of slice and dice between the spiritual and the material. A "spiritual" marriage is one which involves the flesh; involving the bodies the Lord gave us, and they are to be involved according to His design.

There is a "fleshy-ness" to marriage. It started with Eve being taken from Adam's bodily side and then being presented to him, and he immediately understood that this was fleshy: "This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh" (Gen. 2:23). In marriage, the physical aspects are to be statements of a return to the Garden; naked and not ashamed. This is a matter of holiness and spiritual well-being. This is one of the Lord's ways of protecting His institution, His children, and His testimony. Paul is specific because some in Corinth were thinking the way to spiritual health in marriage was through saying "No" and in practicing a form of marital celibacy.

7:3-5—There is to be a mutuality; a demonstration of union and one flesh in this.

There is no room for a "me only" approach to this. There is no male superiority in this, nor is this some kind of demand passage of one upon the other. This would have been shocking to many in that context, and it is still shocking to many in ours. Once again, the Christians are the radicals.

There is to be a mutual understanding of joining together as well as in not joining together

This is expected in marriage

This relates to the health of the marriage

Paul is clear that the physical aspects of marital union are matters of warfare because of Satan's lurking and because of our own weakness.

Some Concluding Points

To strengthen each other—Trinitarian communication—Not all about me—Selfishness is exposed—Receiving good gifts

