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1 Corinthians

And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power.

1 Corinthians 6:14

In complete and absolute support that sexual immorality is not to be condoned, Paul now ties his discussion in with the resurrection of Christ. It is Paul's way of saying, "Think!" In the last verse, he said, "Now the body *is* not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." To make this so obvious that anyone should see the importance of the matter, he next says, "And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power."

He has tied our lives in with the perfect, sinless, Son of God. Because He was found without sin, He was raised to life; death has no power over Him. It was "not possible that He should be held by it" (Acts 2:24). This is the basis on which He was raised. If sin were found in Him, He would not have been qualified for the resurrection. And it too is the only basis for our resurrection. It is not because we are sinless in and of ourselves, but because we are sinless "in" Christ. That means "right now." That means we are "right now" connected to Him.

As this is true, then engaging in sexual immorality among believers is to abuse our granted position and to hold in contempt that which is sacred - the only tie that we have for our granting of eternal life. Paul will continue with this thought in the coming verses, but 1 Corinthians 6:14 should be enough to wake up any sleeper and open their eyes to the truth that sexual immorality is not to be engaged in or tolerated.

Life application: We are "in" Christ. We are united to Him and sealed with the Holy Spirit. Is it a light thing that we would so misuse our position in Him that we would excuse voluntary sin? Let it never be so!

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make *them* members of a harlot? Certainly not!

1 Corinthians 6:15

"Do you not know" is Paul's rhetorical way of saying, "You should certainly know..." It is an obvious truth that anyone who has called on Christ should know what he will now state. It shouldn't take any additional reflection or consideration. He is relaying now a thought based on his previous statement of verse 14 which said, "And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power."

If God will raise us up by His power because of the work of Christ, then we must be "members of Christ." It should be a self-evident fact to the believer. And because it is, he asks another rhetorical question, "Shall I then take the members of Christ (meaning "my" members because I am united to Christ) and make *them* members of a harlot?" The question begs a negative response!

Harlotry has no place within Christianity and is used by Paul as an all-encompassing term for any sexual immorality. The Bible allows one type of sex and that is between a man and a woman within the bonds of marriage. Anything else is a perversion of this. A harlot not only engages in sex with many partners, but she does so for pay. And this was commonly connected to religious rites. Because of this, Paul uses harlotry as the premier example of sexual immorality.

By engaging in sex with a harlot, we are uniting that which is sacred and set apart to God with that which is profane and opposed to God! As Ellicott notes, "The double act of taking them away from their glorious union with Christ, and joining them to a base body, is implied in the Greek." It is a double-slap in the face of that which is upright and acceptable for the Christian.

Life application: Although Paul is speaking of sexual immorality, we should consider every action we take in life in conjunction with our spiritual connection to Christ. David, in the Psalms says, "I will set nothing wicked before my eyes..." Isn't this the right, noble, and honorable path to follow in all things. Let us "fix our eyes on Jesus" and not on that which is base and inglorious.

Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body *with her*? For "the two," He says, "shall become one flesh." 1 Corinthians 6:16

So far, Paul has argued against sexual immorality from several different perspectives. Now in verse 6:16, he reaches back to the very first account of man on earth from Genesis 2. God intended for man to have a partner and he intended for them to be united in a way which was unique to humanity. As it said in Genesis 2 after naming all the animals God created, "But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him."

And so, God created a woman for the man. In their union, the two "shall become one flesh." Paul has just said to those in Corinth (and thus to us) "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make *them* members of a harlot? Certainly not!" His words are built upon the thought that we are "in" Christ. Therefore, when we unite in an immoral way, we are defiling the very bond in which we exist by bringing into it an act which is wholly ungodly and immoral.

Such is the case when a man unites with a harlot. Considering this, how reprehensible are such acts in any other form - homosexuality, bestiality, etc? God has ordained the parameters of sex and he has written it on our hearts. To attempt to justify sexual sin in any way is to "suppress" the knowledge that God has given us. Paul lays this out in Romans 1:1. There can be no excuse for such acts, and yet they are often what seem to define us as humans. Our fallen, corrupt nature makes us yearn for the profane and the perverse. The remedy is Jesus. We are to fix our eyes and our thoughts on Him and we are to be obedient to the word He has given.

Life application: Sexual sins are no less consuming of our minds and thoughts than drug or alcohol addictions. They can fill us with great anguish and turmoil. This leaves us with real choices, just as the other addictions. We can hold on to Christ, being obedient to His word, or we can allow ourselves to let the flesh take over. Hold firm to the Lord. If you are "in" Him, then He will strengthen you for the battle you face.

But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit *with Him*. 1 Corinthians 6:17

We are shown that the bond between a man and a woman who are united in marriage is likened to our union with Christ. Paul said in the previous verse that the two "become one flesh." In a similar manner, but on a spiritual level, "he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him." The words "with Him" are inserted for clarity, but the Greek actually says, "one spirit is." There is a spiritual connection to each believer that is realized when they receive Jesus Christ as Lord.

In this verse then is not only the establishment of the concept of oneness in spirit, but the truth that because we are one in spirit, our actions now truly affect that bond. This is why Paul is so adamant about our rejection of sexual immorality. To engage in perverse acts after being saved is to do so when united to Christ. Paul is asking them to seriously think this through from the eternal perspective.

But there is also one other point of doctrine which is implicitly upheld by this very verse; the doctrine of eternal salvation. If we are joined to the Lord in this way, then it becomes apparent that our salvation must be eternal. If we engage in a perverse act, such as adultery, and it is something that affects our union with Christ, then it must be that the union with Christ is maintained despite the fault. Otherwise, Paul would have noted it as a warning that the bond would be severed. However, nowhere is that concept even hinted at. Thank God for what Jesus has done. We continue to be saved, despite ourselves.

In his ever-consistent way of describing our union with Christ, we see that Paul speaks of it elsewhere. Here are two examples from the book of Galatians -

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Galatians 2:20

"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Galatians 3:17

Life application. We are one with the Lord in spirit. He lives in us and we have put Him on as our garment of righteousness. Let us attempt to always live up to that glorious position. He is holy and so let us act in holiness as well.

With Christ I too have been crucified

It is no longer I who live but He

When I called on Him, at that moment I died

And the life I now live is one in Him, eternally

I now live by faith in the Son of God

Who loved me and gave Himself for me

Help me Lord, in Your steps always to trod

And to reflect in You a life which is pure and holy

For surely into Christ I was baptized

And in Him is eternal life realized

Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. 1 Corinthians 6:18

Paul's words concerning sexual immorality now result in a direct command - "Flee it!" No stronger words could be uttered. They are direct and specific. Based on what he has already said, and what he will say in the coming verses, this is something of the highest significance and importance. And he gives the reason why when he says that "every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body."

This is a tie directly back to what he said in the previous verse. We are united to Christ and are one with Him in spirit. Therefore, by sinning against our own body, we are sinning against Him directly. The concept of "body" here is inclusive of the entire man, not merely the flesh (as he pointed out in his note about "foods" earlier. Sexual sin is a direct sin against Jesus Christ because believers are "in" Jesus Christ. Let us consider this carefully as we conduct our lives.

It has been said that there is safety in numbers, but in the case of sexual immorality, there is greater safety in running away. This is what Joseph did when he was confronted by Potiphar's wife. He knew that involvement with her was wrong. And that was at a time before the giving of the law. We have the lessons of the time of the law and we have the New Testament to guide us since the passing of the law. How can we believe we will escape judgment if we are caught up in sexual immorality?

Fleeing from such sin in this manner is imperative and it calls to mind James' words in his epistle. In James 4:7 it says, "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." We are to resist the devil, flee from sin, and submit to God. If we do these things, we will be sound in our faith and practice and we will stand approved in our conduct.

Life application: Thoughts lead to action and therefore we should always endeavor to control our thoughts concerning sinful practices. The Bible asks us to rather "fix our thoughts on Jesus" (Hebrews 3:1). By doing so, we will keep from getting side-swiped by the devil and finding ourselves in an unhappy position.

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?* 1 Corinthians 6:19

"Or do you not know" is intended to be taken as a positive affirmation - "Certainly you must know!" It is a rhetorical question designed to get the letter's recipients (and thus us) to think this issue through clearly. And the issue he is speaking of is that "your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is in you.*" This then is another case raised by Paul why we should not be engaged in sin and impurity.

There are three general uses for the term "temple" in the Bible which we need to understand. The first is the temple (earlier before the temple was built it was the moveable tabernacle) in Jerusalem. This was the place of worship for the covenant people and it showed that God was among them. The second is found in the gospels and it is speaking of the Lord's physical body. Now in the epistles, it refers to the believer in Christ who is sanctified by the sealing (and thus the indwelling) of the Holy Spirit.

As a substantiation of this, we can refer to verses such as 2 Corinthians 6:16. There it says the following -

"And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

'I will dwell in them
And walk among them.
I will be their God,
And they shall be My people.'"

The Holy Spirit "whom you have from God" is He who seals us (Ephesians 1:13, 14) and thus He is our guarantee. He indwells us from the moment we believe. And as much as He is a guarantee, the Spirit also is a sign of ownership. We have been purchased and are owned by God. This is why Paul now declares "and you are not your own." We belong to that which we are a slave to.

We were once owned by the devil because we were slaves to sin (see John 8:34 and Romans 6). However, through the blood of Christ, we were redeemed and now are slaves of God. If we are slaves of God, then we belong to Him. If we belong to Him, then we are bound under Him to be obedient to Him. We cannot and we dare not assume that we have license to sin. Such a thought is corrupt and wicked. It defies the very authority of our Master over us.

In a human master-to-slave relationship, disobedience would be considered intolerable. Why should we think it is different with God? But this is the constant theme of those who want to have their foot in both worlds. On one hand they claim *freedom from sin* in Christ and on the other they claim *freedom to sin* because of Christ. It is both illogical and perverse.

Life application: Go to work today and tell your boss that that you will no longer adhere to his rules, guidelines, and authority. See how far that gets you and then consider how much less God appreciates such defiance. (Note: Don't actually go to work today and do those things.)

For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. 1 Corinthians 6:20

This is the last verse of chapter 6 and it is an exacting follow-up to Paul's previous words that said "you are not your own." We are not the possessors of our lives, nor are we to be the deciders of our conduct. These now belong to the Lord. He has purchased us and is our Master and His word is our instruction manual for conduct. We are entirely under His authority because we "were bought at a price."

But what was the price? What value was set on redeeming us from the power of the devil? The answer is found in Jesus' final words upon the cross. In John 19:30 we read this -

"So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit."

The word from which "It is finished" is translated is the word *tetelestai*. It indicates the completion of something; the rendering of a payment and the final act of purchase. In his first epistle, Peter confirms that it was the cross of Christ which made this possible -

"...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." 1 Peter 1:19, 20

"The precious blood of Christ" implies the death of the Lord. The death of the Lord occurred on Calvary's cross. Therefore, we were purchased through His horrifying death. Because such an enormous price was paid, how can we consider it acceptable to live in sin? Our Master has given us His directions and those directions never condone our right to sin. It is unthinkable to even consider! And so Paul says, "therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

As we are "in" Christ, and because He is sinless and also our Lord, how can we justify sinful actions? We belong to God and are bound to His word as our rule and guide. Understanding this shows us the immensity of the importance of knowing and adhering to His word. If we are His, what would make us think that we should follow extra-biblical church rules which conflict with Scripture, a pastor's unbiblical teachings, or any other set of directions besides those given by God?

It is a simple issue to think through. If we work for a company, Dwyer Industries for example. Would it make any sense to ignore the directions and policies of the company? Would we bring in the directives of another company or listen to a

mid-level manager who was making up his own policies which conflicted with the company's instruction manuals? No!

If this is the case with a work environment, how much more should we who are in a bondservant position under God be willing to submit to His guidance and instruction! And yet, how flagrantly we treat the Bible, dismissing those things which we find unsuitable to our tastes? Let us remember our state and stand fast on the counsel given in the Holy Bible. As Bengel's Gnomon states, "They are in error, who think that God should be only internally, or only externally worshipped." Our state is one which is wholly subservient to the Lord - body and spirit. We are to worship Him with our minds, bodies, deeds, and actions.

Life application: What is the value of the death of Jesus Christ to you? In what esteem do you hold His cross? Is it simply a ticket to heaven but a chance for free-living until then? Or do you cherish it right here and right now as a mournful necessity occasioned by our sin? Look to the cross; cling to the cross; and boast in the cross. In doing so, you will conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the cross.

Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me:

It is good for a man not to touch a woman. 1 Corinthians 7:1

In these words, Paul is referring here directly to a question which had been asked of him - "Now of the things of which you wrote to me..." The first of the issues is concerning marriage and his words are probably a direct response to the question. For whatever reason, the issue of celibacy as opposed to marriage had been addressed. The term "to touch a woman" is a way of indicating marriage.

Paul is saying that there is nothing wrong with celibacy. In this, he uses the term *kalon*, "an excellent thing" instead of a word of lesser impact *agathon* which means merely "good." It is this terminology which was probably borrowed word for word from the letter he received. They asked his opinion and he in turn has provided it in confirmation. It would be like someone asking, "Isn't the sky really

blue today?" The answer might be, "Yes, it is really blue." The words "*It is good for a man not to touch a woman*" then are his response.

Q: "Is it good for a man not to touch a woman?"

R: "Yes, it is so."

In other words, what Paul is saying is not intended to mean that it is *better* to remain celibate than to be married, but not being married is an excellent thing. He will explain his reasons why as he goes on, justifying the soundness of living a celibate life. From this beginning point, he will give quite a few details concerning marriage as well. Some will reflect the Lord's own words concerning the issue and others will be his interpretation of the state of things.

However, he will speak of the appropriateness of marriage throughout his thoughts. Thus it confirms that he is not using this verse as a greater or lesser comparison, but rather as a confirmatory response to a question.

Life application: Context is always a necessary aspect of our Bible interpretation. If we fail to consider context, we will inevitably come to faulty conclusions concerning matters which will affect our walk with the Lord and our understanding of what is sound or unacceptable for our lives.

Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. 1 Corinthians 7:2

Our second verse of chapter 7 shows us that Paul was certainly responding to a direct question in the previous verse. There he said, "*It is good for a man not to touch a woman.*" The concept of "marriage" is connected to "touch a woman." In other words, to remain celibate is a good thing and he had no problem with such a lifestyle. He himself remained unmarried.

However, there is also a reason for marriage instead of celibacy which he now explains by beginning with "nevertheless." His words now are set in contrast to what he just said. The idea is, "Remaining celibate is fine, but on the other hand..." And the reason is immediately given which is "because of sexual immorality."

Someone who decides to remain celibate is just as likely to be tempted as he is able to refrain. If he is tempted and fails, he will then be engaged in "sexual immorality" because sex is confined to the bonds of marriage. Therefore, being celibate is a noble goal, but it is not the norm and it is bound, in many cases, to result in sin rather than devotion to the principle for which it was intended.

And so, because of the propensity for falling into sexual immorality, "let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband." Paul is indicating that being married is preferable to falling into sexual immorality. Although marriage increases problems and trials in many ways, it is a better option than engaging in illicit behavior which thus defiles the body of Christ (as he spoke about in detail in chapter 6).

It is rather unfortunate that some denominations within the church failed to heed these words of Paul and instead mandated that their clergy remain unmarried. This is for several important reasons -

- 1) It binds those who are in such positions to something which is contrary to nature.
- 2) It leads to exactly what Paul notes today, sexual immorality.
- 3) Christianity is disgraced by the actions of those who have so conducted themselves in these vile practices.
- 4) It is unbiblical.

Once sexual immorality sets into such an environment, it leads to greater perversion as sexual misconduct becomes entrenched in the clergy. And sadly, the greater sexual perversion is directed to those who are easily controlled and

manipulated. It has become a horrifying result of the misuse of what God intended for His people and it has so tarnished some denominations that those outside of the church view Christianity with eyes of contempt.

Life application: God created woman for man and it is normal and healthy for them to be married. No other sexual relations are authorized by the Bible except those of a man and a woman who are married to each other.

Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. 1 Corinthians 7:3

Paul is using delicate terms to speak of the marriage bed. He began to allude to this in the previous verse and he will expand on it in the verses to come. After having discussed celibacy and that it was a fine and acceptable action to take, his words to those who decide rather to be married are that they should act in a manner which demonstrates that state.

There is an affection that is due between a man and a woman who are united in marriage and it goes in both directions. If one has decided against celibacy and for marriage, then that which belongs to marriage should not be denied by either spouse. His words are subdued to avoid any hint of perversity or indecency. Instead, the marriage bed remains undefiled and he is using terms which express this.

Life application: When one is married, there are expectations from the spouse which are not to be denied by the other spouse. If they are, then why would they have agreed to the marriage? But they did and they therefore have obligations to provide the affection due to the other.

The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband *does*. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife *does*. 1 Corinthians 7:4

This verse is a truth which goes back to the very creation of man. In Genesis 2:24 it says -

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

Because they are now "one flesh," there is an authorized control over one another that cannot be dismissed. This verse is not to be separated from the previous verses. Paul noted the appropriateness of marriage because of what would otherwise devolve into "sexual immorality." After that, he showed that a man is to give his wife due affection and the wife is to offer the same to her husband. In other words, they are not to deny the rights of the bed in marriage.

To further strengthen this concept, he provides this verse of clarity. "The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does." The wife cannot force the husband to live as a celibate. Nor should the wife force him into even temporary celibacy. Instead, she is to offer herself to him because he possesses authority over her.

"And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife *does*." In the same manner, the husband is not to deny the wife what she desires in the marriage bed too. She has like-authority over the body of her husband. Neither has a higher standing in this relationship; both are to be granted the fulfillment of their needs and desires. And the reason, based on his previous words, is obvious.

If either denies the other their rightful due, it will more than likely end in frustration leading to divorce or adultery. If to divorce, it may still be considered adultery (as will be seen in the coming verses). Whichever is the case though, sexual immorality (and thus sin) is the expected result. And this sin came about from denying what is otherwise a God-granted right because of the marriage vows which were taken.

Life application: Marriage and the marriage bed are not to be used as weapons between spouses. They are to be used to build a harmonious relationship which meets the needs and desires of one another.

Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. 1 Corinthians 7:5

Based on his words of the previous verse, Paul now introduces a word of instruction to avoid problems which may arise between the married. Beginning with "Do not deprive one another" his intent is to show that it is not right for a man to deprive a wife, nor a woman to deprive a husband of their rightful due within the marriage. As one another's body belongs to the other, there is no "right" to deny what actually has mutual ownership.

However, there may be times where there may be a mutual agreement to remain temporarily celibate. It should not occur "except with consent for a time." The only reason for one to deny the other is when it was mutually agreed and then only for a short time. The verb used here is in the aorist tense showing that it is intended for brief periods at best, not for continuous years or some lengthy period. A span may be desired, for example, for mourning the loss of a loved one or possibly for seeking God's face for some reason. This is not without prior precedent. When the people were to see God's presence on Mount Sinai, they were given this instruction -

"So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and sanctified the people, and they washed their clothes. ¹⁵And he said to the people, 'Be ready for the third day; do not come near *your* wives.'" Exodus 19:14, 15

In a like manner, Paul says that by mutual consent, a couple could abstain "that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer." For a higher purpose of a spiritual nature, temporary celibacy is acceptable. However, Paul understood that we are still in our frail human bodies and it is not the norm for married couples to live in

such a manner. Instead, he instructs that they are to "come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control."

Should a prolonged time of such celibacy occur in a marriage, thoughts will begin to wander, temptations will begin to arise, and the flesh will make itself known once again. In such a weakened state, Satan will come to tempt even the strongest person. Many pastors and other followers of Christ have fallen because of such enticement. And this comes from a "lack of self-control." This is the natural thing which occurs when someone is weakened through temptation.

King David found this out personally as have so many others. There was probably no initial thought in his mind that he would disobey the Lord's command. But in his weak state he succumbed to adultery and then murder to cover it up. If this can happen to Israel's sweet psalmist who penned words of beauty to the Lord even in the most trying circumstances, how certain is it that we too can fall in this manner!

Life application: God, through Paul's hand, has given us these instructions for intimate conduct between a man and a woman who are married. If they are not adhered to, or if the man or the woman intentionally violates what He has instructed, it is sin. Be ready to perform the duties which you promised when you made the original vow of marriage to your spouse.

But I say this as a concession, not as a commandment. 1 Corinthians 7:6

This verse has caused great conflict between scholars as to exactly what Paul is speaking of. First, some translations say, "But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment" (KJV). The intent of what Paul says then becomes unclear. Some have taken it that the "permission" is something that was granted him to say, but not as a commandment. This is not the intent at all.

Rather, the word "concession" shows what he means much better. He is leaving the details of the lives of believers, whether they decide to remain celibate or get married, up to the individuals. However, as we will see, he is doing it with his own personal advice on the matter (this will be seen in the coming verses).

The second area of conflict is exactly what Paul says is a concession. Is it from 7:1? Is it from the preceding verse? What is it that he is not commanding, but rather is giving as sound instruction? The answer is clear from the text itself. Verse 7:1 said, "Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me:" In response to the first question, he began with his instruction on celibacy versus marriage. During this entire set of verses, and for the next two to come, he is giving personal advice on the matter. He has not issued any command, but is merely responding as he believes is appropriate.

When we come to verse 7:10, he will issue a "command." At this point, the words of concession end and direct obedience to the words issued is expected. Until that time, his words are intended for a sound contemplation of the issues of celibacy and marriage. Both are authorized by God and so it is obvious that there are no commands concerning the issues, but rather words of wisdom which will keep the individual or married couple free from unhappiness in their chosen state.

Understanding this brings us to the third difficulty. Are the words of Paul inspired or not during these first 9 verses? He is claiming that his words are a concession or an "allowance" for believers to follow. If they are his words, and he is not claiming inspiration in the matter, are the words truly to be considered a portion of the word of God and thus inspired?

The answer is "yes." They are written by Paul as he was carried along by the Holy Spirit. Regardless as to whether his words are merely descriptive, prescriptive, for exhortation, for advice, or for instruction, they are the words God intended for the particular subject in question.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 16:5, "Now I will come to you when I pass through Macedonia (for I am passing through Macedonia)." This is merely a descriptive thought. Paul is describing what will happen. Nothing is required for us, and yet it is inspired because God intended for this thought to be in the Bible.

In 1 Corinthians 5:11 he says, "But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person." This is a prescriptive verse, a command, that is to be followed in Corinth and in all churches at all times. Obedience is expected and something is required for us, and it is inspired because God intends for us to be obedient to His directive, given through Paul.

The same is true with all other forms of writing used in Scripture - wisdom, poetry, history, advice and counsel, instruction, etc. Each has a place and all are inspired. They are exactly what God wants for us to be built up and edified with.

Life application: Understanding context and also style of biblical writing is extremely important to grasp what is being said, to whom, and for what purpose. Arching over all of this though is the expectation that we believe that the Bible is truly God's word. If we accept this premise, then we will properly apply the context and style to our walk with the Lord. Dismissing even one verse of Scripture because we disagree with it will unravel the entire tapestry of the word and it also demonstrates that we believe that what God says is less important than what we desire; it is idolatry. Let us carefully and tenderly handle God's precious word.

For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that. 1 Corinthians 7:7

Paul's words here are debated, not because they are difficult to understand, but because of presuppositions in those who read what he has penned. This is true with much of the Bible. What we already believe will affect what we read and

assimilate. It is difficult, but not impossible, to set our presuppositions aside, but it is always the right course to take.

He begins with, "For I wish that all men were even as I myself." This is the disputed portion of the verse. Paul was unmarried as we can glean from 1 Corinthians 7:8. Because of this, those who prefer the single, celibate life will naturally tend to infer that he means that he "wished all were unmarried as he was." This however is not what Paul means. He is speaking of his ability to control his sexual desires, even in his unmarried state. He wished that all had the same control as he did.

This is obviously the correct rendering for several reasons. First, marriage is a God-instituted rite and was given to man for the very reason of having a partner that man could join with. Secondly, if all were celibate as he was, there would have been one generation of Christians and then the faith would have ended. And thirdly, he has already given instructions to both the married and the unmarried and they deal with proper handling of sex, not just abstinence, as the main issue.

Instead of improperly engaging in sexual activity, he finishes this thought with, "But each has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that." In other words, some have the gift of remaining unmarried and not being tempted in their celibacy. Others have the desire and urge to engage in a relationship and so God has given them the right to such a relationship in marriage. Thus, even these words, "one in this manner and one in that," demonstrate that he is not saying that he wished all remained unmarried, "but that every one had the same grace of continence which he himself was endowed with." (CJ Ellicott).

Life application: Whether we decide to remain unmarried or to marry, we are to abstain from sexual immorality in the state we are in. God has ordained that sex be confined to a man and a woman who are married to one another.

*Though many trials and temptations may come my way
I pray for strength to remain faithful to You, O God
Grant me the ability to turn and walk away
From any form of sin which lies ahead on the path I trod*

*Oh, that I would be faithful to Your word!
And that I would never displease You with the life I live
Help me to bring honor and glory to You my Lord
In this one life which to me You did give*

*Thank You for Your kind hand of grace upon me
And thank You for looking after Your other children, all of us
I know that it is a gift which is granted for all eternity
And it came through the precious shed blood of Jesus*

But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am;... 1 Corinthians 7:8

This is a follow up to the question levied to Paul about being celibate as opposed to getting married. He answered the question about celibacy, spoke of marriage, and has returned to both those who are unmarried, and those who were married but who are now widows. He is doing this because eventually the question would have been made, "Does his advice on celibacy and marriage pertain in these circumstances too?"

He is presenting a logical, orderly, and complete response to their question. And so "to the unmarried and to the widows" he gives guidance - "It is good for them if they remain even as I am." In other words, there is nothing wrong with never getting married, nor is there anything wrong with a widow remaining a widow.

Having said that, he is neither mandating this, nor is he saying that there is something wrong with getting married or getting remarried. In fact, in 1 Timothy, he will give this advice concerning younger widows -

"But refuse *the* younger widows; for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they desire to marry, having condemnation because they have cast off their first faith. And besides they learn *to be* idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not. Therefore I desire that *the* younger *widows* marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully."
1 Timothy 5:12-14

Everything must be taken in context and the reason behind each statement must be considered. To take any of these individual verses from Paul and use them as a stand-alone text, will inevitably result in bad doctrine. Eventually, things like Catholic doctrine where priests are to remain unmarried will result from a misinterpretation of Scripture and then other, much greater, problems will inevitably arise within the church.

Life application: The Bible covers the main issues that we need for the conduct of our lives. If we properly apply it, we will be in good shape as we live lives of holiness and purity in the presence of the Lord.