**LIVE IN UNDIVIDED DEVOTION TO THE LORD**

1 Corinthians 7:1–40

Key Verse: 7:35 “**35**I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.”

This morning, we will talk about how to please God with our practical lives. The Apostle Paul tells us how believers in Jesus should live through married and unmarried lives. However, no matter what situation we are in, we can find a common principle of life, which is that all believers are called to be servants of Jesus and must live a life to please God. A life to please Jesus means a life to obey the words and will of Jesus. That life is to live in the right way in undivided devotion to the Lord. I pray that we will have a time to think about our spiritual direction and reflect on the attitude of life through the passage.

**Part 1: Concerning Married Life (1-16)**

Apostle Paul was not married, but he seemed to know a lot about married life. It is said that the reason he wrote about marriage was due to questions he received from a member of the Corinthian church who asked about marriage. However, since we do not currently know what the questions were specifically, we can only roughly infer it only through Paul's answers that appear in the letter. At that time, the city of Corinth and the church in Corinth had extreme ideas about marriage. Unlike the people of the city of Corinth, the Corinthian church had people who thought they should not even get married at all, influenced by the asceticism of Greek philosophy. Apostle Paul offers a different perspective about marriage from an evangelical standpoint. In other words, like Apostle Paul himself, if you can live as a single person and serve God, then it is better not to marry, but if you cannot live as a single person, then get married and still serve God through that marriage.

Look at verses 1-7. “**1**Now for the matters you wrote about: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.” **2**But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband. **3**The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. **4**The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife. **5**Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. **6**I say this as a concession, not as a command. **7**I wish that all of you were as I am. But each of you has your own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.”

Verses 1-7 are about the conjugal relationship and the duties of husband and wife. A man and a woman must marry in order not to fall into sexual immorality and in order not to become slaves to sin. Even after marriage, husbands and wives should try not to fall into sexual immorality. In order to do so, husband and wife must fulfill their marital duties so that Satan does not take advantage of them. They should also treat each other sincerely and not deny each other respect. The union of husband and wife is the smallest unit that opposes the fight against sin.

In the previous chapter, Apostle Paul mentioned, “**18**Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. **19**Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own (1 Corinthians 6:18-19)”. Paul was forceful with his language, but he did not say that it is wrong to be married. He acknowledged that God's calling and gifts are different. Thus, the unmarried or widowed are encouraged to marry if human weakness cannot be overcome (8-9).

Look at verses 10-11. “**10**To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. **11**But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.” If a wife has separated from her husband, it is commanded that she stays as it is or be reconciled and united again, and the husband strongly urges that he should never divorce his wife. This prohibits divorce for the sake of fornication or marriage to another person. Apostle Paul's words are the same as Jesus forbade divorcing for lust. Jesus said, “**4**“Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ **5**and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? **6**So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”(Matthew 19:4-6).

Look at verses 12-16. “**12**To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. **13**And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. **14**For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. **15**But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. **16**How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?”

When you are married to an unbeliever or when you become a believer after your marriage, you should not divorce your spouse just because your spouse does not believe. It is because marriage can bring salvation to the unbeliever. So then what if an unbeliever leaves a marriage? Apostle Paul tells them to live as it is. And it is because God has called us to live for serving God in peace with our situations.

After all, we must please God throughout our married lives. We must find, practice, and fulfill God's purpose through our married lives. We must serve God, help our spouses develop, and strive for the growth and faith of our children as believers and as recipients of God’s grace.

**Part 2: Concerning Change of Status (17-24)**

Look at verse 17. “**17**Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.” Apostle Paul says that believers must live faithfully as when they were called for the circumstances God has placed on them. This is a word that has been the principle of all churches at that time.

For instance, whether one received circumcision as a Jew or did not receive circumcision as a Gentile is a personal situation. And he does not need to try to change this situation. Whether circumcised or uncircumcised, the condition of Jewish law does not matter. The most important thing is to keep the commandments of God revealed through Jesus and live according to them (18-20).

Verses 21-24 apply this principle to the situation of enslaved peoples. See verses 21-24. “**21**Were you a slave when you were called? Don’t let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, do so. 22For the one who was a slave when called to faith in the Lord is the Lord’s freed person; similarly, the one who was free when called is Christ’s slave. 23You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of human beings. 24Brothers and sisters, each person, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation they were in when God called them.”

It is God who calls upon each one of them, gives them missions accordingly, and shows them personal compassion. Therefore, if you believe in God personally, you can remain in any circumstance and serve God accordingly. However, if you have become a free person now, you must live as a servant of God, not as a servant of man.

**Part 3: Concerning the Unmarried (25-40)**

The fact that we should be servants of God and not servants of men is also found in the instruction given by Apostle Paul on marriage. Look at verse 25-28. “**25**Now about virgins: I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgment as one who by the Lord’s mercy is trustworthy. **26**Because of the present crisis, I think that it is good for a man to remain as he is. **27**Are you pledged to a woman? Do not seek to be released. Are you free from such a commitment? Do not look for a wife. **28**But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this.” Apostle Paul recommended that these people should avoid marriage if at all possible. He hoped people would serve God as a single man or woman because they would have many hardships in this life. However, if they have agreed to marry, then they will be married. Apostle Paul advises that getting married is not a sin.

Then, what intention did Apostle Paul have in his heart? Look at verses 29-31. “29What I mean, brothers and sisters, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they do not; 30those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; 31those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.” Because this era will end soon, live as if you have a wife or not, live as if you are not sad even if you have something to be sad about, live as if you did not buy something even if you bought something, and do not be immersed in it even if you use the things of this world. Since for this world, as it presently appears, all will pass away.

Upon the words of Apostle Paul, we can feel a sense of urgency, but it is said that Paul had thought Jesus would come very soon. But to be more precise, we are all passing. As we live on this earth, we rejoice over what we have, and grieve over what we don't have, and live as if this world is everything and will last forever. But we will get old and pass when the time comes. James 4:13-14 says: “**13**Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” **14**Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.”

When facing with the prospect of death, you might feel fear and sadness. However, that moment is the time when you face God alone, and it will be the moment when God's great grace comes upon you. At that time, one can fully focus on God. On the other hand, it will be a time to look back on how we have lived our lives on earth by God's grace and according to God's will. We will go to Heaven holding onto the hands of Jesus, our Lord.

Apostle Paul advised not to marry in order to be free from concerns. An unmarried man thinks how to please God with an undivided heart. So, Apostle Paul invites us to live with undivided devotion to Jesus (32-35). What if a man finds a partner, and believes he has an obligation to marry her? Apostle Paul said it's not a sin to get married. (36-38). Also, if a woman's husband dies, she can get married as she wants, but the person must be a believer in God (39-40).

I have been married for 25 years. When my first child was born 24 years ago, I decided to be a good father to the little baby. However, looking back on the past, I was not. Time passed and now I am the father of three children. However, I have not been loyal to God due to my unbelief, and I was bound by life issues and struggles and often barely lived in despair. Even in the moment I deliver this message now, I pretend not to be, but I am just a hypocritical sinner. Nevertheless, my wife's help is great for me to be able to live as a father and husband. And I think the more fundamental reason is that God has been leading me so far. I pray that I will become a person who knows Jesus well and pleases God.

In conclusion, believers may find themselves in a variety of situations. However, for the sake of Jesus, the Christ of grace and love, we can choose the best life, whether it be marriage or whatever, and live while seeking the kingdom of God. We must choose Jesus, who is the perfect wisdom, and live a life that pleases Jesus. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says. “**31**So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” I pray that the grace and wisdom of God will overflow within you. Amen.