

Undistracted Devotion

Long Beach Alliance Church • July 12th, 2009 • Pastor Chris Lankford

This I say for your own benefit;
not to put a restraint upon
you, but to promote what
is appropriate and to secure
undistracted devotion to the Lord.
~1st Corinthians 7:35 (NASB)

1) The Trouble With Virgins

- A) You will recall that the followers of Christ in Corinth were concerned that changing their life circumstances (e.g., marriage, divorce, circumcision, etc.) could enhance their followership of Jesus (1st Corinthians 7:1-24).
- B) However, the consistent teaching of Scripture was for people to “remain with God in that state in which you were called” (7:24).
- C) In other words, your circumstances do not dictate your followership of Jesus -- following Jesus in the midst of your circumstances (despite them?) is the ultimate goal.
- D) Up to this point, Paul has only been concerned with those already married. Now he turns his attention to those still wanting to get married, the “virgins” (7:25).

- E) The word for “virgin” (παρθένος) is synonymous with “never married” in our modern context. Some versions render the word “betrothed,” but Paul uses a different word for “betrothed” (ἀρμύζω) elsewhere (cf. 2nd Corinthians 11:2). Simply, “virgin” = “never married.”

- F) It is also appropriate to remember that the word “virgin” is a female term (note 7:28). However, the passage is addressed to men. Why? Because men (both fathers and suitors) led in every aspect of the marriage process. “Virgins” accommodated to male leadership/headship.

2) Three Calls (And A Reminder) To Undistracted Devotion

- A) Thus, Paul’s first call is to those who have never been married (7:25-31). Consistently applying the “remain as you are” theme, Paul calls on the never married to remain unmarried in light of the “present distress” (7:26), which he goes on to explain as the impending “end times.”

- B) The singular focus of the passage is captured in the next section (7:32-35) as a call to be “free from concern” (7:32). Noting the “divided interests” of those married (7:33-34), Paul seeks “undistracted devotion to the Lord” for those who might still be “never married” (7:35).

- C) The final call is for a father who is giving his daughter (“his virgin,” 7:36) away in marriage. The life of the daughter was in the hands of her father. While there is concession for giving away a daughter for marriage (7:36, 38), it is “better” (in light of the present distress, 7:26) for the daughter to remain never married (7:37-38).

- D) Paul “capstones” his discussion on with a direct call to widows to marry “in the Lord” (7:40), a reminder of the call to “undistracted devotion in the Lord” (7:35).