

1 Corinthians 7:17-24
Paul's Principle: Stay As You Were
When Called

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The Situation Paul Was Addressing

- The Corinthians believed that change in status (i.e. becoming celibate even though married) was needed to help conform them to the more "spiritual status" they had already attained.
- Paul refutes this notion by explaining that the only change in status that matters is the status of right standing before God in Christ.
- Because a believer's justification transcends all other relationships, believers are "free" to remain in their previous social construct (married, single, circumcised, free, slave, etc.).

Principle: Stay As You Were When Called

1 Cor 7:15-16 Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. (The ideal to be strived for – rather than the exception). For how do you know, O wife whether you will save your husband? Or how do know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?

1 Cor 7:17 Only as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches.

Εἰ μὴ = Only, nevertheless – used to make exception of the previous negative clause in 7:15

1 Cor 7:17 Only, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches.

1. These are synonymously parallel: Christ (Son) and the Father each have assigned/called people to their individual social settings in life (married, single, etc.).

2. These clauses indicate distinct actions: Christ has assigned each person's social setting, and God the Father has called people to salvation.

Assigned = ἐμέρισεν aorist, active, indicative – used in Romans 12:3 for the allotment of a spiritual gift.

Has called = κέκληκεν perfect, active, indicative – used for the initial call to salvation (cf. 1:9, 24).

Freedom In Christ To Live Out Our Calling

1 Cor 7:17 Only, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches.

Περιπατεῖτω = imperative to "live out" their calling in whatever social sphere they were assigned.

- "Paul's intent is not to lay down a rule that one may *not* change; rather, by thus hallowing one's situation in life, he is trying to help the Corinthians see that their social status is ultimately irrelevant as such (i.e., they can live out their Christian life in any of the various options) and therefore their desire to change is equally irrelevant..." (Fee, NICNT).

Paul Explains What Really Matters

1 Cor 7:18-19 Was any man called *when he was already* circumcised? He is not to become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called in uncircumcision? He is not to be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but *what matters* is the keeping of the commandments of God.

Ἐντολή = generally refers to the Mosaic Law (cf. Rom 7:8,9,10,11,12,13; 13:9; Eph 2:15; 6:2)

1. Circumcision is one of the commandments of God
2. All commandments of God must be obeyed by people
3. Therefore, Circumcision must be obeyed by people

The Fulfillment of Circumcision

Gen 15:18 On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your seed I have given this land..."
 Made = קָרַת "to cut"

Gen 17:2, 7, 11 "I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly...I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your **seed** after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant...And you shall circumcise in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.

1. Sign – symbolizes a greater reality
2. God cuts the covenant/ Abraham cuts the symbol of "Seed promise"
3. Christ cuts the covenant: Matt 26:28 ...this is My blood of the covenant which is poured out for many...

The Fulfillment of Circumcision

Deut 10:16 So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer.

Deut 30:4, 6 If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back...Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your hearth and with all your soul, so that you may live.

Ezek 36:26 Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you...

Rom 2:28-29 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, **by the Spirit**, not by the letter...

Christ Fulfilled The Law For Us

Sacrifice: Christ is our once for all sacrifice: Heb 9:26

Sabbath : Christ is our Sabbath rest: Col 2:17

Circumcision: We have the "circumcision of Christ" Col 2:11

Ceremonial Cleanliness: In Christ, we are perpetually clean

John 13:10 Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you."

Romans 10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

~~1 Cor 7:21-22 Each man must remain in that condition in which he was called. Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but you are able also to become free, rather do that. For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave.~~

ΕΙ ΚΑΙ
 Negative: "even though you are able also to become free, instead make the most of it."
 Positive: "if indeed you are able also to become free, by all means make use of it."

1. Conjunction: connective/adversative αλλα
 2. Verbal "wiggle room" ... δύνασαι ἐλεύθερος γενέσθαι... (inf.)
 Infinitive fits better with one time action (becoming free) than continuing in some action (remaining in slavery)

~~Don't Be Slaves To This World's Ideas~~

1 Cor 7:23-24 You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men. Brethren, each one is to remain with God in that *condition* in which he was called.

Why the command not to become slaves?
 It seems that Paul could care less about status?

Paul is probably using "become slaves of men" in a metaphorical sense: The Corinthians were slaves to the false notion that status mattered and that by changing status – they could better reflect their "spiritual status." To believe this was to be in bondage to man's thinking!

~~In an exceedingly mobile culture, in which upward mobility is almost a sacred duty, a passage like this does not get an easy hearing. On the one hand, there are those who think so poorly of their status that they find difficulty seeing it as a place in which to live out their calling as believers. The standard formula begins, "Oh, I'm just a ..." On the other hand, the tendency of most is to see status as significant, and change as necessary. The two points Paul makes need to be heard anew. (1) Status of any kind is ultimately irrelevant with God. One is simply no better off one way or another. That does not mean that in a culture that provides opportunity one should not seek "to better oneself." But it does mean that one whose life has been determined by God's call should not put any stock in it. (2) Precisely because our lives are determined by God's call, not by our situation, we need to learn to continue there as those who are "before God." Paul's concern is not with change, one way or the other, but with "living out one's calling" in whatever situation one is found. There let one serve the Lord, and let the call of God sanctify to oneself the situation, whether it be mixed marriage, singleness, blue- or white-collar work, or socioeconomic condition. (Fee, Gordon D)~~
