

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 224 – August 12th – 1 Corinthians 7:25-40

Works frequently referenced in these notes on 1 Corinthians

John Drane	<i>Paul</i> , Lion Publishing, Berkhamstead, 1976
Leon Morris	<i>The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians</i> , Tyndale New Testament Commentary, 2 nd Ed., IVP, Leicester, 1985
Anthony C Thistleton	<i>The First Epistle to the Corinthians</i> , The New International Greek Testament Commentary, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2000

Verse 25

Περὶ δὲ τῶν παρθένων ἐπιταγὴν κυρίου οὐκ ἔχω, γνώμην δὲ δίδωμι ὡς ἠλεημένος ὑπὸ κυρίου πιστὸς εἶναι.

περι δε indicates that Paul is turning to another subject about which the Corinthians had written to him.

παρθενος, ου f virgin, unmarried girl

Is the term here used exclusively of married *women* or is it gender exclusive? Thistleton thinks that Paul is addressing the issue of those not yet married, though with particular attention to unmarried *women*. Many understand the term here to refer to those *engaged* to be married. It may also include those who were attracted to a form of 'spiritual,' celibate marriage.

ἐπιταγη, ης f command, order, authority

Cf. 7:10,12.

γνωμη, ης f intent, decision

ἠλεημένος Verb, perf pass ptc, m nom s
 ἔλεαω and ἔλεεω be merciful, show kindness; pass. receive mercy

πιστος, η, ον faithful, trustworthy, believing

Here, 'trustworthy.'

Verse 26

νομίζω οὖν τοῦτο καλὸν ὑπάρχειν διὰ τὴν ἐνεστώσαν ἀνάγκην, ὅτι καλὸν ἀνθρώπῳ τὸ οὕτως εἶναι.

νομίζω think, suppose

ὑπαρχω be (equivalent to εἶμι)

ἐνεστώσαν Verb, perf act ptc, f acc s

ἐνιστημι be present

ἀναγκη, ης f necessity, distress

"The word conveys the notion of *necessity*, *hardship*, or especially of *external circumstances which bring severe constraints or severe pressures*." Thistleton

It is not clear what 'distress' the Corinthians were facing but it seems to have been one that demanded special instructions concerning appropriate conduct. Schweitzer argued that the perspective is here thoroughly eschatological. He argues that Paul's call to celibacy is part of "the comradeship of the Elect with the Messiah in His struggle against evil powers." It is demanded in the face of trials which form part of sharing in the messianic sufferings which bring in the Kingdom of God. Winter, on the other hand, suggests that the 'distress' mentioned was that consequent upon the famine of AD51. Bruce, while acknowledging the eschatological perspective, argues that the present age is marked by increasing tribulation which heralds the end of the age, "of which signs [such as the 'distress' at Corinth] are already manifesting themselves." Thistleton comments, "The most problematic question is how to retain a dimension of eschatology while making room for such concrete instantiations as persecution, famine, or some unnamed source of distress. Luther argues, e.g., that Christians at all times labour under the possibility of persecution, danger of losing one's possessions, friends, or home, or the general costliness of faithfulness to the gospel. Paul's main ground for advice not to marry, Luther insists, is the involvement of one's family in all this (although later he further concedes the point about divided interests). In v.29 Luther translates the eschatology of the shortened time into existential address to 'all Christians,' who are 'like guests on the earth.'"

Jeremias and Barrett think that the ὅτι recitative reflects a slogan at Corinth that matches the structure of 'it is good ...' in 7:1.

Verse 27

δέδεσαι γυναίκα; μὴ ζητεῖ λύσιν· λέλυσαι ἀπὸ
γυναϊκός; μὴ ζητεῖ γυναῖκα·

δέδεσαι Verb, perf pass indic, 2 s δεω bind,
tie

ζητεω seek, look for, attempt

Is this addressing the situation of the married or the betrothed? Betrothal would seem to fit better with the context and argument. In that case the following λελυσαι would refer to the dissolution of the betrothal.

λυσις, εως f separation, divorce

λυω loose, release, set free

Verse 28

ἐὰν δὲ καὶ γαμήσης, οὐχ ἥμαρτες. καὶ ἐὰν
γήμη ἢ παρθένος, οὐχ ἥμαρτεν. θλίψιν δὲ τῆ
σαρκὶ ἐξουσιν οἱ τοιοῦτοι, ἐγὼ δὲ ὑμῶν
φείδομαι.

"Yet again ... Paul emphasises the difference between what is required of the Christian and areas of freedom where Christians must take responsibility for their own decisions after weighing carefully the factors which others (including Christian teachers or pastors) have brought to their attention in a non-directive manner. It is no less important to note this aspect of Paul's understanding of his own role as pastor and of the adult responsibilities of Christian people to work things out for themselves, than to allude to the rules and traditions which allow no negotiation."
Thistleton

ἐὰν if, even if, though

γαμεω marry

ἥμαρτες Verb, aor act indic, 2 s ἁμαρτανω
sin, commit sin

γήμη Verb, aor act subj, 3 s γαμεω

γαμη is an older classical form of the later
Koine aorist subjunctive γαμηση.

θλιψις, εως f trouble, suffering

Thistleton suggests the meaning may here be pressures, e.g. responsibilities (cf. vv 32-35) and τῆ σαρκὶ may mean 'in everyday life.'

σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh, physical body

ἐξουσιν Verb, fut act indic, 3 s ἔχω

τοιουτος, αυτη, ουτον such, of such kind

φειδομαι spare, refrain from, keep oneself
from doing

Verse 29

τοῦτο δὲ φημι, ἀδελφοί, ὁ καιρὸς
συνεσταλμένος ἐστίν· τὸ λοιπὸν ἵνα καὶ οἱ
ἔχοντες γυναῖκας ὡς μὴ ἔχοντες ᾧσιν,

φημι say

May carry the force, 'I mean', or 'I affirm.'

συνεσταλμένος perf pass ptc, m nom s: pass
grow short (of time)

"Many see a reference to the second advent. This may be right, but, though he often refers to the Lord's return, Paul never elsewhere gives this kind of counsel. Both in his earlier and his later Epistles he uses the second advent to inspire men to blameless conduct (e.g. 1 Thess 5:1-11; Phil 1:9-11). The note of present crisis, so marked here, is absent. It is probably best to see a reference to circumstances at Corinth." Morris

Thistleton says that while Paul "appeals to a *theology* of eschatological imminence, this in no way presupposes a *chronology* of eschatological imminence." He cites the view of Winter that the particular problems at Corinth were the consequence of famine, and adds, "Such concrete circumstances bring home the crumbling insecurity of a world order which stands under the apocalyptic judgment of the cross."

λοιπος, η, ον rest, remaining, other: (το)

λοιπον adv. finally, henceforth, from
now on

Verse 30

καὶ οἱ κλαίοντες ὡς μὴ κλαίοντες, καὶ οἱ
χαίροντες ὡς μὴ χαίροντες, καὶ οἱ ἀγοράζοντες
ὡς μὴ κατέχοντες,

κλαιω weep, cry

ἀγοραζω buy, redeem

κατεχω hold fast, keep, restrain

Verse 31

καὶ οἱ χρώμενοι τὸν κόσμον ὡς μὴ
καταχρώμενοι· παράγει γὰρ τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ
κόσμου τούτου.

χρασμαι see v.21

καταχρασμαι use, make full use of

"Those who make use of the things of this world should not be engrossed in them."

Morris

παραγω pass by, pass away, disappear

σχημα, ατος n outward form, present form

"Paul's point is not the transiency of creation as such [note the τουτου in addition to το σχημα], but the fact that its outward pattern, in social and mercantile institutions, for example, has no permanence." Barrett

Verse 32

Θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀμερίμους εἶναι. ὁ ἄγαμος
μεριμᾷ τὰ τοῦ κυρίου, πῶς ἀρέσῃ τῷ κυρίῳ·

θελω wish, will

ἀμεριμος, ον free from worry or anxiety

This term was used by Stoics to signify indifference to external events. But it also "occurs in the teaching of Jesus as a manifestation of the single-mindedness which trust in God brings about (Matt 6:25, 28; par. Luke 12:22,26; Matt 10:19). Paul uses the word elsewhere both in the sense of a prohibition against anxiety in the light of the peace of God (Phil 4:6) and in the sense of encouraging concern for other people (Phil 2:20). Jesus also refers to the worry or worries of the present world order (του αιωνος, Matt 13:22; Mark 4:19)." Thistleton underlines the difference between the Stoic and Christian conceptions: "Whereas Jesus and Paul advocate freedom from anxiety and preoccupation with the self by placing everything in God's hands, in trust, Seneca argues that it is folly to look to God for 'what you can acquire for yourself.' Lack of anxiety for Seneca becomes a matter of accepting fate: 'in noble virtue the willing soul Fate leads; but the unwilling Fate drags along.' Paul invites, rather, responsible deliberation in trust; how is one to please the Lord?"

ἄγαμος, ου f & m unmarried, single
μεριμναω be anxious, be concerned about

There is a play here on words. Paul wants them to be without *distracting worries and concerns* so that they can *devote their concern* to the Lord. "Paul plays on the double sense of *anxious ... right concern*." Moffatt

πως how? in what way?

ἄρεσκω please, seek to please

Verse 33

ὁ δὲ γαμήσας μεριμνᾷ τὰ τοῦ κόσμου, πῶς ἄρεσῃ τῇ γυναίκει,

γαμειω marry

The married man has divided affections. He wants to please the Lord, but he also has responsibilities towards wife (and family) and must concern himself with pleasing her.

Verse 34

καὶ μεμέρισται. καὶ ἡ γυνὴ ἢ ἄγαμος καὶ ἡ παρθένος μεριμνᾷ τὰ τοῦ κυρίου, ἵνα ἢ ἁγία καὶ τῷ σώματι καὶ τῷ πνεύματι· ἡ δὲ γαμήσασα μεριμνᾷ τὰ τοῦ κόσμου, πῶς ἄρεσῃ τῷ ἀνδρί.

μεμέρισται Verb, perf pass indic, 3s μερίζω divide, assign, apportion

There are differences of punctuation here among the manuscripts (and some minor textual variants). The chief alternatives are:

- i) To read μεμέρισται with the previous verse (as NIV), and to read the next sentence as beginning καὶ ἡ γυνὴ ἢ ἄγαμος – 'also the unmarried man ...'
 - ii) To read καὶ μεμέρισται as beginning the sentence in verse 34 and to insert a real or implied pause after γυνὴ and so read, 'the case of a (married) woman and that of an unmarried or virgin also differ ...' as AV
- The textual evidence presents a confusing multiplicity of variants. The UBS text above reflects the reading the Committee considered the least unsatisfactory. It is marked by them as 'D' – great difficulty in arriving at a decision.

Thistleton follows the UBS text in linking καὶ μεμέρισται with the previous verse. "The married man finds himself *apportioned* to both his wife and to the Lord; and it is this *parcelling out* of time, attention, energies, and tasks that means he is pulled in two directions."

παρθενος, ου f virgin, unmarried girl

"The distinction between ἡ γυνὴ ἢ ἄγαμος and ἡ παρθενος has been much discussed. But the difference seems to be fairly clear. The former term denotes (usually) a woman who has been married but is now either widowed, divorced, or in a state of permanent separation. Since the latter subcategory is included, we need not be surprised that Paul does not chose to use χηρα, even if *widows* represents the majority of those included under the broader term." Thistleton

ἦ Verb, pres subj, 3s εἶμι

"Clearly a lesser involvement with 'the things of the world' is correlative with being **holy** both in the OT sense of belonging exclusively to God ... and in the sense of devoted attention and service to the Lord." Thistleton Barrett considers that Paul is here quoting another catchphrase from Corinth, "We must conclude, therefore, that in *that she may be holy both in body and in spirit* we have words quoted from the Corinthian ascetical party. Paul approves the sentiment, though he would not himself confine it to the unmarried." Others suggest the asymmetry is due to the stigma attached to spinsters in the Greco-Roman world. Paul asserts that such a life is pleasing to God (though not to the exclusion of other forms of life).

σωμα, τος n body

Verse 35

τοῦτο δὲ πρὸς τὸ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν σύμφορον λέγω, οὐχ ἵνα βρόχον ὑμῖν ἐπιβάλλω, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸ εὐσχημον καὶ εὐπάρεδρον τῷ κυρίῳ ἀπερισπάστως.

συμφορον, ου n good, advantage, profit

'for your help.'

βροχος, ου m restriction lit. noose
ἐπιβάλλω Verb, aor act subj, 1 s ἐπιβάλλω
lay (hands) on, throw or place on

"The metaphor is from hunting. Paul is not trying to capture and constrain them." Morris
"Paul's motivation and concern are neither purely authoritarian nor largely ascetic, but to maximise the freedom and lack of anxiety experienced by the addressees in the Lord's work." Thistleton

εὐσημιων, ου gen ονος respected,
presentable; το εὐ. good order

Refers to doing everything properly (cf. 14:40).

ἐπαρεδρον, ου devotion, constancy
ἀπερισπαστος without distraction

A word commonly used in Stoic discourse concerning marriage where it is used of the undistracted devotion to study that the unmarried can enjoy. Thistleton comments, "Yarbrough, Wimbush, and Deming all perceive a close affinity between Cynic concerns and those of Paul at this point. This is probably the closest point of affinity in this chapter, with the fundamental difference that (i) Paul speaks of **devotion to the Lord**; and (ii) Christian husband and Christian wife can also encourage and enhance each other's **devotion to the Lord**, even though a balance sheet emerges of 'distractions' generated by family responsibilities."

Verse 36

Εἰ δέ τις ἀσχημονεῖν ἐπὶ τὴν παρθένον αὐτοῦ νομίζει ἂν ἢ ὑπέρακμος, καὶ οὕτως ὀφείλει γίνεσθαι, ὃ θέλει ποιεῖτω· οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει· γαμείτωσαν.

ἀσχημονεω behave improperly

The interpretation of these verses is difficult. (Hurd describes the verse as "one of the most difficult and controversial in the NT.") Who is being spoken of in this verse and what is his relationship with the virgin mentioned? There are three main views:

- Older translations and commentators took the view that Paul is probably speaking of a parent/guardian and of his responsibility towards his unmarried daughter or ward.
- Thistleton comments that "a clear majority of twentieth century scholars interpret v.36 as referring to *engaged couples*." According to this view the reference is to a man and his fiancée who have initially agreed not to marry.

- c) Some suggest that the reference is to spiritual marriages where a couple agree to live together as brother and sister – a union of spirit rather than of body.

After detailed discussion of the options, Thistleton adopts the second, translating the phrase 'If anyone thinks he is not behaving in a proper way toward his betrothed...'

νομίζω think, suppose, assume
ὑπέρακμος, ου past the best age for
marriage, past one's prime (of women)

A woman was considered to be beyond the normal marriageable age by the time she was about 20.

However, it is possible to understand ὑπέρακμος to mean beyond intensity of feeling or passion.' It might then be considered to apply to *the man* in this relationship, 'if his passions are strong' (NRSV, REB, Moffatt). Thistleton adopts a modified version of this view 'if it is an undue strain,' i.e. a strain beyond reasonable limit.

ὀφείλω ought, must, be bound or obligated

'and it seems the right thing.'

γαμείτωσαν Verb, pres act imperat, 3 pl
γαμew v.33

"The key phrase, however, is clear in meaning: οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει. Paul adopts an *anti-ascetic* stance towards the Corinthian ascetics (or at very least one which Wimbush calls 'worldly' asceticism), but is also concerned pastorally to *release those who wish to marry from any sense of sin, failure, or second-class status*. He refuses to allow the voluntary ascetics to regard themselves as a spiritual elite: God's demands remain diverse for different people in different situations." Thistleton

Verse 37

ὃς δὲ ἔστηκεν ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ ἑδραῖος μὴ ἔχων ἀνάγκην, ἐξουσίαν δὲ ἔχει περὶ τοῦ ἰδίου θελήματος, καὶ τοῦτο κέκρικεν ἐν τῇ ἰδίᾳ καρδίᾳ, τηρεῖν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ παρθένον, καλῶς ποιήσει·

"Now that he has established the genuine freedom of the couple to marry or not to marry, Paul does not wish to press the case for marriage too far. The key issue, he argues, is whether marriage or celibacy is chosen as a result of pressure from other people who try to impose celibacy as a higher kind of spirituality, or whether the person in question is inclined in this direction entirely on grounds of personal conviction, with complete freedom from pressure from outside." Thistleton

ἔστηκεν perf ἴστημι intrans (in 2 aor, pf & pluperf; all midd & pass) stand, stop, stand firm, hold ground.

ἔδραϊος, α, ον firm, steadfast

"The whole phrase invites comparison with Paul's later use of the same idea in Rom 14:5: ἕκαστος ἐν τῷ ἰδίῳ νοῦ πληροφορεῖσθω, where the context also concerns the danger of falling prey to the pressure of other people's judgments and pressures." Thistleton

ἀναγκη, ης f necessity, compulsion

'Not under external necessity' i.e. not because other persons or situations are forcing him.

ἐξουσια, ας f authority, right, power

ἰδιος, α, ον one's own

θελημα, ατος n will, wish, desire

"Power over his own will means 'the right to give effect to his own purpose' (Parry). Slaves, for example, would not have this right." Morris. Thistleton interprets the phrase to mean that Paul is asserting that, having taken all other factors into account, the man has 'a full right to make his own decisions.'

κρινω judge

τηρεω keep, observe, maintain

ἑαυτος, εαυτη, ἑαυτον reflexive pronoun, himself, herself, itself

τηρεῖν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ παρθένον 'to respect her virginity' (REB).

"Over against Niederwimmer's undue emphasis on ascetic themes, others rightly keep in view the spirit of this verse by stressing Paul's constant concern to be pastorally positive and constructive, while also emphasising the importance of determining what is helpful in specific cases and circumstances. Paul counsels not withdrawal from the world but 'revitalising' it." Thistleton

Verse 38

ὥστε καὶ ὁ γαμίζων τὴν παρθένον ἑαυτοῦ καλῶς ποιεῖ, καὶ ὁ μὴ γαμίζων κρεῖσσον ποιήσει.

ὥστε so that, with the result that
γαμιζω give (a bride) in marriage
κρεῖπτον and κρεῖσσον adv. better

"Only in the light of all that has gone before can we assess the respective currencies of καλως the adverb, and κρεισσον the comparative adverb. Since he has already explained how much depends on circumstances and personal convictions, he is not damning καλως with faint praise. The use of καλως must also confirm that 7:1 is a quotation καλον ... μη ...). Paul's polemic against asceticism is clear. Nevertheless, his personal inclination is still to encourage those who are content to remain celibate, if this is out of conviction about how they may best serve the Lord, and not because of a Corinthian pressure group. Hence both the married and the celibate are to be encouraged positively; but some extra practical support is given to the celibate." Thistleton

Verse 39

Γυνὴ δέδεται ἐφ' ὅσον χρόνον ζῆ ὁ ἀνὴρ αὐτῆς· ἐὰν δὲ κοιμηθῆ ὁ ἀνὴρ, ἐλευθέρα ἐστὶν ᾧ θέλει γαμηθῆναι, μόνον ἐν κυρίῳ·

δέδεται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s δεω bind, tie

The perfect tense implies the continuing effects of the past act of marriage.

ὅσος, η, ον correlative pronoun, as much as, how much, how far

ζῆ Verb, pres act indic, 3s ζω live, be alive

κοιμηθῆ Verb, aor pass dep subj, 3 s κοιμαομαι sleep, fall asleep, die

ἐλευθερος, α, ον free, free person

θελω wish, will

γαμεω marry

μονος, η, ον i) adj only, alone; ii) adv μονον only, alone

Paul's concern is that a person should not be distracted from devotion to the Lord. Hence, if the widow is to marry it should be to one who shares a commitment to Christ.

Verse 40

μακαριωτέρα δὲ ἐστὶν ἐὰν οὕτως μείνη, κατὰ τὴν ἐμὴν γνώμην, δοκῶ δὲ καγὼ πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἔχειν.

μακαριωτερος, α, ον happier; comparative of μακαριος

μενω trans remain, stay, abide;

ἐμος, η, ον 1st pers possessive adj my, mine

γνωμη, ης f purpose, intent, decision

Cf. 7:25 here the sense of 'opinion.'

δοκεω think, suppose

καγω a compound word = καὶ ἐγω

'I also think' *not* 'I think that I also ...'