

END-TIMES ISSUES

#120 Commandment #7 – Marriage options (5) – Foundation.

"For **many** are **called**, but **few** are **chosen**."
Matthew 22:14 (BSB)

Are you CALLED?

- This is a "Kingdom parable," telling us something about the Kingdom of God. In this context, the word "called" could be translated as "**invited**." (Read it in Matthew 22:1-14.)
- God has invited YOU to have a part in his kingdom. Are you willing to accept the invitation? To do so, there are two requirements:
 - ✓ You must be willing. Many people say "NO!"
 - ✓ You must come on the King's (God's) terms. The person mentioned in vs. 11-12 illustrates this. He doesn't come with the proper attire. (The parable doesn't give us all the details about weddings in that context. Maybe the king provided the wedding clothes. Maybe the clothes just had to be clean <not dirty>, regardless of their style. But the parable implies that he was in the wrong and couldn't defend his actions.)

Are you CHOSEN?

- ✓ A shift in focus. The "calling" or "invitation" focuses on human responsibility. Here, the focus shifts to God's sovereignty. In some passages, this word "chosen" is translated as "**elect**" – "chosen by God."
- ✓ Has God chosen YOU to have a part in his kingdom?
 - ✓ The natural response of a sinner (= all of us) is to say "**NO**" to God's invitation. Saying "**YES**" is 100% contrary to our natures. If God did not do any choosing, there would be *nobody* saved. We might not want to "go to hell," but we are 100% opposed to what *genuine* salvation is all about. *We aren't interested in serving the king.*
 - ✓ IF God has chosen you: You now have a desire to *obey* the king and *live* for the kingdom of God. If you don't have that desire, and you aren't choosing to do it, *you have not been chosen.*
 - ✓ Be aware that Scripture ALWAYS tells us that God's sovereignty and human responsibility work together. So, your choices will reflect the reality of the situation. *Don't wait to "feel" chosen – start making the right choices and trust God for the ability to do so!*

God's people are both CALLED and CHOSEN!

- **PAST:** At the beginning, when they accepted God's invitation (= a focus on human responsibility) – illustrated by the verse we already saw.
- **FUTURE:** In the end, when they are with Jesus. They remain *called* and *chosen*. They have also demonstrated their *faithfulness* to Jesus.

... the Lamb ... is Lord of lords and King of kings; and He will be accompanied by His **called** and **chosen** and **faithful** ones.
Revelation 17:14b (BSB)
- **RIGHT NOW:** In-between those two points in time. This is where we now are, and God has given us a job to do! (Now is the time we *prove* whether or not we are faithful to him. It will be too late if we wait until the end.)

But you are a **chosen** people ... to proclaim the virtues of Him who **called** you out of darkness into His marvelous light.
1 Peter 2:9 (BSB)

» Our faithful conduct is also the way we make sure of our "**calling** and **election**" (election = God's *choosing* of us) – 2 Peter 1:10. (See the context. This is the basis for "assurance of salvation.")

Most New Testament passages that mention being "called" are referring to people who appear to have already come to Jesus. (Matthew 22:14, used in the parable, is the exception.)

- Most passages are addressing a group of people – the "church."
 - ✓ Such groups will contain those who have a genuine salvation – those who are "*called* and *chosen*," and are *faithful* to Jesus.
 - ✓ **Fakes may also be present.** They've been "called" (invited); they may *think* they are chosen. *But their "fruit" proves them false.* They either *depart after a while*, or else *never have the faithfulness* of those who are genuine.
- This is the case in our passage today: **1 Corinthians 7:17-24.**
 - ✓ Here, the concept of being "called" occurs *nine* times. (The exact number of times seen in English translations may vary.)
 - ✓ Are these Corinthians also "chosen"? *Each individual's response* to God's Word would give us the answer – just as it does for *us*.

THE "CALL" TO SALVATION:
(Matthew 22:12)

CALLING (justification)

THE "CALL" OF JESUS' FOLLOWERS (THOSE WHO ARE "CHOSEN"):
(Most other verses.)

CALLING (sanctification)

CALLING (glorification)

Our **PAST** CALLING

Our **PRESENT** CALLING

Our **FUTURE** CALLING

MANY → FEW → CALLED (& CHOSEN) – They heeded the call.

- About our calling: It is glorious!
 - ✓ God has given us an ironclad guarantee! If he *began* a good work in us, he will also *complete* it! If we have been *justified*, he guarantees that we will someday be *glorified*!
 - ✓ How does he accomplish this? By *sanctification*! He works in our lives, to accomplish what we need. He tells us what we need to do, in Scripture. And he gives us the desire and power to do it.

FROM START TO FINISH!

... being confident of this, that He who **began** a good work in you will **carry it on to completion** until the day of Christ Jesus.
Philippians 1:6 (BSB)

GOD AT WORK IN US!

And we know that in all things **God works for the good of those who love him**, who have been **called** according to his purpose.

ULTIMATE GOAL: WE WILL BE LIKE JESUS!

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

FROM START TO FINISH!

And those he predestined, he also **called**; those he **called**, he also **justified**; those he **justified**, he also **glorified**.

NOTHING CAN STOP IT!

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If **God is for us**, who can be against us?
Romans 8:28-31 (NIV)

THE "PAST" ASPECT OF OUR CALLING:

- **God saved us, NOT because we deserved it, but simply because he wanted to.**
 - ✓ He did it because of his own glory and goodness – 2 Peter 1:3.
 - ✓ He called us by his grace, so don't turn aside to a false "gospel" – Galatians 1:6 ; see also 2 Timothy 1:9.
 - ✓ He has a purpose for doing this, and it's for our good – Romans 8:28; see also 2 Timothy 1:9.
- **He brought about extreme changes in our lives.**
 - ✓ He called us out of darkness and into light (1 Peter 2:9).
 - ✓ He declared us righteous (= sinners, now *justified*), and our future *glorification* is as good as *already accomplished* (Romans 8:30).
 - ✓ We have been freed from the Law's condemnation (though that doesn't give us freedom to sin) – Galatians 5:13.

THE "FUTURE" ASPECT OF OUR CALLING:

- **Eternal life, an inheritance, etc. – something wonderful to look forward to.**
 - ✓ Eternal life – Hebrews 9:15; 1 Timothy 6:12.
 - ✓ A glorious, eternal inheritance – Ephesians 1:18; Hebrews 9:15.
 - ✓ A "prize" for all our efforts to live for God – Philippians 3:14 (we are to follow Paul's example).
- **These things are linked to our willingness to follow Jesus *now*.**
 - ✓ Sharing in Jesus' eternal glory comes *after* suffering for him in this present life – 1 Peter 5:10.
 - ✓ Inheriting a blessing comes *after* our willingness to bless those who do us harm or insult us – 1 Peter 3:9. (This "blessing" he mentions probably includes *actions*, not just words.)
 - ✓ Sharing in Jesus' glory – 2 Thessalonians 2:14; made possible by the sanctifying work of the Spirit in us (occurring *right now*) and our willingness to believe the truth – vs. 13, 15.

THE "RIGHT NOW" ASPECT OF OUR CALLING:

- **Even now we have a special relationship with him.**
 - ✓ We belong to Jesus Christ – Romans 1:6.
 - ✓ We are called God's "sons" – Romans 9:26; and "children" – 1 John 3:1; Jesus calls us his "brothers" – Hebrews 2:11.
 - ✓ We have fellowship with Jesus Christ our Lord (master) – 1 Corinthians 1:9.
 - ✓ We are loved by God and kept safe by Jesus Christ – Jude 1:1.
- **We also have a special responsibility to live for him.** This is the obligation to *be* holy.
 - ✓ Being holy is our *calling* – Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2.
 - ✓ Being holy is our obligation – 1 Peter 1:15-16.
 - ✓ God *called* us to live holy lives (not impure lives) – 2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:7.

IF THESE THINGS ARE TRUE OF US, IT WILL AFFECT HOW WE LIVE!

- **We have a *glorious* calling, and have an obligation to live ("walk") in a way that is worthy of that calling.**
 - ✓ We need to pursue a *worthy* life, with the goal of being counted *worthy by God* (also aware that *his* power makes it possible) – Ephesians 4:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:11.
 - ✓ Part of fulfilling this goal includes a willingness to tell others the wonderful things about God – 1 Peter 2:9.
 - ✓ Willing to let Christ's peace control our lives – Colossians 3:15; 1 Corinthians 7:15.
 - ✓ Willing to suffer for Christ (responding like he did, when he suffered) – 1 Peter 2:21.
 - ✓ Willing to "repay" the evil or insults of others with blessing – 1 Peter 3:9. (The "blessing" we give them, is probably intended to include the things we *do*, not just what we *say*.)

WITH ALL THAT GOD HAS DONE ...

- ✓ **THE PAST:** The amazing things God did when he called us.
- ✓ **THE FUTURE:** The glorious things we have to look forward to.
- ✓ **THE PRESENT:** The way God *changes* those who he has called, giving them a desire to live for him and to pursue holiness.

WE NEED TO REMEMBER WHO WE ARE.

↓

- **Most, if not all, of us are what the world would call "nobodies."**
 - ✓ It's *always* been this way - just like at Corinth.
 - ✓ The few "somebodies" that God calls have a *greater* responsibility to use their "greatness" for God, and a *greater* judgment if they don't.
 - ↳ If they *do* pursue holiness, it will be something that *all* of us will benefit from; if they *don't* pursue holiness, their judgment will be horrible and severe.

WHO DOES GOD CALL (IN SALVATION)?

NOT MANY WISE, INFLUENTIAL, OR UPPER CLASS!

GOD USES "NOBODIES" TO SHAME THE "SOMEBODIES" AND TO BRING THEM TO NOTHING!

AND THIS IS WHY!

Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were **called**.

Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.

But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise;

God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, **so that no one may boast before him.**

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 (NIV)

OUR COMPLETE DEPENDENCE ON GOD!

WE HAVE NOTHING TO BOAST IN, EXCEPT IN GOD!

It is because of [God] that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

Therefore, as it is written:

"Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord."

1 Corinthians 1:30-31 (NIV)

THIS APPLIES EVEN TO THE FEW "SOMEBODIES" WHO ARE SAVED!

BOAST IN GOD AND HIS GREATNESS!

(THEN FOLLOW HIS EXAMPLE!)

"Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 9:23b-24 (NIV)

With all that God has done for us, WHAT ALL DO WE NEED TO CHANGE?

- We've seen the wonderful calling that God has called us to.
 - ✓ But are there life circumstances that we need to *change*, so that we can pursue this calling?
- False teachers were telling the Corinthians about changes they needed to make, if they wanted to become "spiritual."
 - ✓ Even today people judge "spirituality" by a person's circumstances in life – their background, occupation, diet, marital status, etc.
- But what does Scripture say?
 - ✓ Obviously, we need to stop living in sin. (An unwillingness to stop is an indication that we are not saved.)
 - ✓ But what about everything else in life?
 - ✦ The answer is: We need to change **nothing!** We can pursue God's calling in *any* circumstances we might find ourselves in!

GOD CALLS US TO LIVE OUR CALLING, NOT TO CHANGE IT!

Regardless, each one should lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him and to which God has called him.

This is what I prescribe in all the churches.

Each one should remain in the situation he was in when he was called.

Brothers, each one should remain in the situation he was in when God called him.

1 Corinthians 7:17, 20, 24 (BSB)

[EXAMPLES GIVEN HERE] (Shown on the following pages.)

- Live the life God has given you – but live it for God!
 - ✦ You can stay in the situation you were in, when God called you. No need to pursue something that the world considers more "spiritual"!
- This principle applies to *everyone* – not just the Corinthians.
 - ✦ This means it applies to us. We can live for God in the situation in which he calls us.

PAUL GIVES US SOME EXAMPLES:

Again, we must emphasize that this obligation/principle does NOT apply to anything sinful.

- ✦ In that case, we need to change.
- ✦ But there are *so many possibilities* in life that can be done without sinning... and these are the focus of this principle.

- **EXAMPLE #1: Differences in marital situations.**
 - ✓ Single (celibate) vs. married. (We looked at this example at the beginning of the chapter.)
 - ✓ Each of these situations has its value.
 - » Remaining celibate may be the preferred option. If you have the ability to be that way, then stay that way.
 - » Being married also has its value (including the potential for less temptation); but it results in increased obligations. If you are married, stay that way, if possible.

- **EXAMPLE #2: Differences in "spiritual background."**

Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised.

Was a man still uncircumcised when called? He should not be circumcised.

Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commandments is what counts.

1 Corinthians 7:18-19 (BSB)

 - ✓ Jews had certain special privileges and opportunities (including possession of the truth) that the Gentiles did *not* have. Does that mean *their* calling was better than the Gentiles?
 - ✦ Absolutely not! Those privileges weren't the issue. (They increased the Jew's accountability before God, but those things did not save them.)
 - ✦ What matters is our willingness to obey God – our pursuit of holiness – not our "spiritual background."

THE "SPIRITUAL PRIVILEGE" OF BEING A JEW: What, then, is **the advantage of being a Jew**? Or what is the value of circumcision? **Much in every way.** First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God.

... the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory and the covenants; theirs the giving of the law, the temple worship, and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them proceeds the human descent of Christ, who is God over all, forever worthy of praise! Amen.

Romans 3:1-2; 9:4-5 (BSB)

THE "DISADVANTAGE" OF BEING A GENTILE: ... you who are **Gentiles** ... were **separate** from Christ, **alienated** from the commonwealth of Israel, and **strangers** to the covenants of the promise, **without hope and without God in the world.**

Ephesians 2:11b, 12b (BSB)

Jesus calls BOTH to follow him, each in his own set of circumstances. What matters is our willingness to pursue holiness and obedience, not our "spiritual pedigree"!

EXAMPLE #3: Differences in life circumstances and in occupation.

Were you a **slave** when you were **called**? **Do not let it concern you**—but if you can gain your freedom, take the opportunity. For he who was a **slave** when he was **called** by the Lord is the Lord's **freedman**.

Conversely, he who was a **free** man when he was **called** is Christ's **slave**.

1 Corinthians 7:21-22 (BSB)

- Scripture tells us that we have **freedom** in Christ, and also that we are Christ's **slaves**. Both are true; but your situation in life may influence which you focus on (though you won't *deny* the other).
 - We don't have to worry if we must work for someone else—doing what *they* tell us to do, instead of deciding for ourselves. In Christ, we are **free** to pursue the calling he has called us to, *within our circumstances*. (If we *do* get an opportunity to become free, it's OK to take it. Then the following applies.)
 - Those who are (or who become) free have a different calling—the opportunity to have a **greater** focus on **servin**g Christ.
 - In EITHER situation, we can pursue our calling to be holy.**

Were you a **slave** when you were **called**? **Do not let it concern you** ...

1 Corinthians 7:21a (BSB)

WHY did we describe this as "working for someone else," instead of "being a slave"?

- These instructions by Paul represent a **principle** that is applicable to *any* work situation that involves working for someone else. The issue is the **relationship** that exists between the individuals, not the **name** or **title** that you give to them.
- It's the same with other passages where Paul instructs both slaves and masters in how they are to interact with each other.
 - Failure to recognize this results in sin being committed by *both*.
 - This sin can be seen *every day* in the modern workplace: Employers try to take advantage of employees; employees try to minimize the amount of work they do. *Both actions are sin*—sin that would not exist, if people followed Paul's instructions.

Both slave and master, employee and employer, are to treat the other properly. Both are accountable to God, their Master in heaven.

ANY SITUATION IN WHICH YOU WORK FOR SOMEONE ELSE: Slaves, obey your earthly **masters** in everything, not only to please them while they are watching, but with sincerity of heart and fear of the Lord.

Whatever you do, work at it with your whole being, for the Lord and not for men, because you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as your reward.

It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Colossians 3:22-24 (BSB)

THIS APPLIES TO BOTH: **Whoever** does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is **no favoritism**.

Colossians 3:25 (BSB)

ANY SITUATION IN WHICH SOMEONE ELSE WORKS FOR YOU: **Masters**, supply your **slaves** with what is right and fair, since you know that you also have a **Master in heaven**.

Colossians 4:1 (BSB)

NOTE THE PARALLELS.
(Don't blur the differences between marriage and slavery/employment!!)

The marriage issue.	The slavery/worker issue.
Being single (celibate) is the better option. You have greater freedom in how you serve God.	Being a free person is the better option. You have greater freedom in how you serve God.
Being married is good, because you can still serve God in that capacity. But you have added responsibilities toward your spouse.	Being a slave/worker is good, because you can still serve God in that capacity. But you have added responsibilities toward your master/boss.
If your spouse dies , you can choose to remain single (the better option); but you can also marry (still a good option).	If you become free/independent , it may allow you a greater freedom in the way you serve God. [It's not wrong if you continue to serve God as a slave/worker.]

(The ultimate issue is how you will serve God, not if you will serve God.)

Warning: Don't be enslaved by false teachers!

You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.

1 Corinthians 7:23 (BSB)

- This is being addressed to **everyone**. Paul is *not* condemning slaves for being slaves! He is talking about *spiritual* slavery to false teachers.
- This issue is this:
 - We belong to Christ. *He* bought us. *He* is our master. Don't let someone take his place! Don't "sell your soul"!
 - False teachers were enslaving people. They were going around, trying to turn Jesus' followers into slaves of rules and regulations that *they* (not Jesus) were promoting.

... there will be **false teachers** among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies... In their greed, these **false teachers** will exploit you with deceptive words.

2 Peter 2:1, 3b (BSB)

GOD/JESUS BOUGHT YOU; AND IT WAS FOR A SPECIFIC PURPOSE:

... the church of God, which He **purchased** with His own blood.
Acts 20:28b (BSB); also Revelation 5:9.

You are not your own; you were **bought** at a price.
Therefore glorify God with your body.
1 Corinthians 6:19b-20 (BSB)

... our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. He gave Himself for us to **redeem** us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, **zealous for good deeds.**
Titus 2:13b-14 (BSB)

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were **redeemed** from the empty way of life you inherited from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or spot.
1 Peter 1:18-19 (BSB)

FALSE TEACHERS WANT TO ENSLAVE YOU:

... false brothers had come in under false pretenses to spy on our **freedom in Christ Jesus**, in order to **enslave** us.
Galatians 2:4 (BSB)

★ **THE CORINTHIANS WERE GUILTY OF LETTING THEM DO THIS TO THEM:** In fact, you even put up with anyone who **enslaves** you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or exalts himself or strikes you in the face.
2 Corinthians 11:20 (BSB)

... how is it that you are turning back to those weak and worthless principles? Do you wish to be **enslaved** by them all over again? It is for **freedom** that Christ has set us **free**. Stand firm, then, and do not be encumbered once more by a yoke of **slavery**.
Galatians 4:9b; 5:1 (BSB)

See to it that no one takes you **captiv**e through philosophy and empty deception, which are based on human tradition and the spiritual forces of the world rather than on Christ.
Colossians 2:8 (BSB)

So HOW DOES ALL THIS FIT IN OUR EVALUATION OF MARRIAGE OPTIONS?

- It is part of the **FOUNDATION** that is to govern all of life.
 - When we realize that God has: ----- put us **where we are**, and **called** us **where we are**, and given us a special **calling** that we can fulfil **where we are**,
 - Then we can have **CONTENTMENT** in being **where we are**!
 - Circumstances may change – whether by our choice (such as a new employment opportunity) or by events beyond our control (such as the death of a spouse). We can accept such changes. *But we need to continue to live for God* in them.

➔ **THIS IS WHY WE CAN DESCRIBE THIS SECTION AS:**
5. CONTENTMENT IN ONE'S CIRCUMSTANCES.
➔ Even in marriage issues!

WE CAN LEARN TO BE CONTENT IN OUR CALLING! AS WE TRUST GOD, HE EMPOWERS US!

... I am not saying this out of need, for **I have learned to be content regardless of my circumstances**. I know how to live humbly, and I know how to abound. I am accustomed to any and every situation—to being filled and being hungry, to having plenty and having need.
I can do all things **through Christ who gives me strength**.
Philippians 4:11b-13 (BSB)

Of course, **godliness with contentment** is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, so we cannot carry anything out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these.
1 Timothy 6:6-8 (BSB)

Rejoice at all times. Pray without ceasing. **Give thanks in every circumstance**, for this is **God's will for you** in Christ Jesus.
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (BSB)

OUR MISSION:

PURSUE THIS:

5. CONTENTMENT IN ONE'S CIRCUMSTANCES.

EACH of us has circumstances that are not always pleasant. But ALL of them can be viewed as a **CALLING**, and can be used to honor God!

★ This includes the various potential marriage situations that people may find themselves in. **Honor God in them!** ★

Credits

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