

Remembrance day service

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 13 November 2022

Preacher: Martin Ayers

[0 : 00] Our reading this morning is from 1 Corinthians chapter 7, reading from verse 1 to 24, and you'll find that on page 1148.

Now, for the matters you wrote about, it is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman, but since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband.

The husband should fulfil his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. 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. 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. I say this as a concession, not as a command. I wish that all of you were as I am, but each of you has your own gift from God.

[1 : 27] One has this gift, another that. Now to the unmarried and the widows, I say, it is good for them to stay unmarried as I do. But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

To the married I give this command, not I, but the Lord. A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband, and a husband must not divorce his wife.

To the rest I say this, not I, 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. 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.

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.

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.

[2 : 45] How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife? 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. Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called?

He should not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts. Each person should remain in the situation they were in when God called them.

Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you, although if you can gain your freedom, do so. For 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. You were bought at a price. Do not become slaves of human beings. Brothers and sisters, each person, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation they were in when God called them.

[4 : 00] This is the word of the Lord. Thanks for reading, Katrina. And if you could keep your Bibles open at 1 Corinthians 7, that would be really helpful.

You can find an outline inside the notice sheet just to follow through the points as we look at them, as Paul makes them. I'm looking around and seeing people that I've met in the last couple of weeks. And so you've been with us visiting St. Silas as we've looked at 1 Corinthians 6, and now we're in chapter 7.

And you might be thinking, what is going on in this church? But we are working through books of the Bible, chapter by chapter, so that we're letting God set the agenda. And clearly what's happening here is the setting for this letter, this valuable letter of Scripture that Paul's writing to, was a church that was very mixed up in its ideas of what being spiritual meant and what that meant for our bodies and for sex.

And that's why we're looking at it together. But we trust that's profitable for us as we look to discern the will of God for our lives. Just a reminder as well, as we say often at church, and hopefully that comes out in what we sing and how we pray, that following Jesus is a faith about God's grace to us.

So when we look at commands in the Bible, the principle isn't I obey to be accepted. It's I'm accepted, therefore I obey.

[5 : 26] And so where we come to commands in this chapter and we feel that we haven't measured up to these commands in the past, it's important to remember that we're not defined.

When we come to Christ and trust him, we're not defined by our past. We've been washed clean by him. But it's right to ask, how then should we live to please God? And that's what's going on in Corinth and for us today.

So let's ask for the Holy Spirit to help us as we turn to this section. Let's pray. Father God, as we turn to your word, we ask that you will help us.

That where we feel we've messed up, that you would reassure us and your gospel promises would comfort us. Where we are wayward today in our pattern of life, we ask would you correct us.

And where we're struggling to trust you, would you strengthen us. We pray that you will be at work in us for what's pleasing to you. And we ask this in Jesus' name.

[6 : 27] Amen. So we're in this section looking at sex and the Christian life. God is interested in all of our lives and that includes our sexuality and includes what we do with our bodies.

And as we come to look at what the Bible says here about marriage and singleness today and next week, it's worth remembering we live in a country where views about what's right and wrong in sex have changed radically within the lifetimes of people in our church family.

There's been an extraordinary change in views about sexual morality. So that 60 years ago, if a government minister was found to be having an affair, they would have to resign.

They wouldn't be able to carry on. People would think, if your spouse can't trust you, we can't trust you. And now, our former health secretary is on I'm a celebrity, get me out of here, doing forfeits, apologizing to the nation that he disgraced himself.

And he disgraced himself, in his words, because he had an affair while he was the health secretary. And he went home that night when he was exposed and told his wife and his three children that he was leaving them for his aid he was having an affair with.

[7 : 48] But people were not concerned about the affair. The scandal was that he'd broken social distancing rules. That was the problem. And that he had set those rules for us and he'd stood within two meters of his aid.

And we know he'd done more than that, but that wasn't people's concern. So with views about sex and marriage shifting so rapidly around us, how do we make sense of what the Bible says and how countercultural it is?

Well, there's a book, *Swipe Up*, by a writer, Jason Roach, Christian writer, where he urges us to see that Christians actually have a better story to tell about sex and relationships than the world.

And it's a story about God and his people. That God is a lover who calls us as his people to love like him. God is a lover who calls us to love like he loves.

So God loves his people sacrificially, exclusively, unconditionally, passionately, permanently. And that gives his people security.

[8 : 52] It transforms them knowing that love from him. And he calls his people to strive for marriage relationships where husband and wife mutually display that kind of love.

Now, our passage this morning starts with verse 1, Now for the matters you wrote about. So the apostle is writing to a church he planted that was asking lots of questions.

And we've heard in recent weeks the church was immature. Sure, they thought that being a Christian and being spiritual encompassed your inner life. But some of them were thinking, so what you do with your bodies maybe doesn't matter to God.

And they thought your bodies didn't have a future. And we heard last week Paul teaching them that your bodies do have a future. God raised Jesus from the dead and he'll raise his people from the dead.

We have an embodied future. And we ended last week hearing that we should glorify God with our bodies. Verse 20 of chapter 6, You were not your own. You were bought at a price.

[9 : 55] Therefore, honor God with your bodies. So in this section now, he explains what that might look like. He addresses the married. So there's wisdom for the married. You see that on the sheets.

Then we're going to see he has wisdom for some different groups. And thirdly, he gives us wisdom for all Christians about our social status. So first, wisdom for the married to enjoy more sex.

Let's look at verse 1, what the Corinthians had written to Paul. They were saying, It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman. And it looks as though they were saying that about husbands with their wives.

Why would someone think that? Well, maybe they didn't think it because they'd heard something of what Paul said in verse 19 of chapter 6. If you have a look there. That he said, Your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit who is in you.

Whom you've received from God. And maybe they were thinking, Well, if the Holy Spirit is in me now. Should that? And that, Paul has said that should motivate you not to sleep around outside marriage.

[10 : 59] But one might then think, Is there something unspiritual then about experiencing sexual pleasure with my husband or wife? And instead, Paul urges them.

He encourages them in verse 2. Have a look. But since sexual immorality is occurring, Each man should have sexual relations with his own wife.

And each woman with her own husband. And so we heard last week that Paul is against sex without marriage. And now we're hearing that Paul is against marriage without sex.

And this is very topical. This week in the news, there was a celebrity couple, Neil Gaiman, a writer, and Amanda Palmer, who's a singer. They were in the news because they'd been known previously for publicly saying they had an open marriage.

Their marriage was not an exclusive relationship. And they announced this week that their marriage is over. They've left one another. And one writer that I was reading, There's lots of commentary about this in the news, about open marriages.

[12 : 04] And one writer, Giles Corrin, Writing yesterday as a columnist about married life, He's in his early 50s. And he was just commenting in light of that news. And he was saying that rather than wishing that he and his wife had an open marriage, He was saying he does wish that they'd agreed some things when they got married that he doesn't think were in the marriage vows they made.

And then he sets them out. So for Giles, some of them were just his own pet hates. He said this about when they got married. It would have been good to sit down and agree that as the years pass, A mutual attraction fades.

We will continue to load the dishwasher with all the concave surfaces facing the rotating spray And not lob everything in willy-nilly as if there was a little man in there With a hose and a brush going around scrubbing everything.

So you can see there's maybe some counseling needed there. But he ended the article saying that rather than wanting an open marriage, He said this, most of all, I wish we could have made a wild and crazy pact That we would continue having sex despite being married with each other.

Yes, even if the kids are asleep next door. Now, I don't know who did marriage prep with Giles and his wife, But the Apostle Paul's understanding of marriage is that it is part of the commitment Of a Christian married couple that they would have sex.

[13 : 33] And they'll keep having sex. It's part of the promises they make as they give one another to one another. So Christianity, you can see there, looking at what people are saying this week in the news, Is radically subversive about sex and relationships.

In being against sex outside marriage. And also against marriage without sex. And the Apostle Paul here is clearly concerned that married couples don't give up on sex.

In fact, he uses the language of it being a duty that every husband owes to his wife. And every wife to her husband. If you see that in verse 3. The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife.

And likewise the wife to her husband. We mustn't mishear this. In that there are seasons in life for many couples.

Where health issues might mean that sex is impractical in marriage. And that might be for a short season. It might be for a very long season in a marriage. And no one should feel guilty about that.

[14 : 39] Or ashamed of that. If health prevents them from sexual intimacy. But what Paul is saying here is that the normal prescription for Christian marriage is lots of sex.

A few years ago we had a retired couple visit St. Silas. John and Ann Benton. So an older couple. They came to talk about parenting. With parents here. But they talked a little bit about married life as well.

And they said in the church today what we need is more hot monogamy. That was their phrase. And it was wonderful to hear from this elderly couple. Whose bodies don't look the same as they looked when they got married.

Hot monogamy. Committed faithful marriages. In which the husband and wife choose to be positive about their sexual intimacy with each other.

By talking about it as a duty here. We're seeing that sex. It's never something that is to be demanded of the husband or wife.

[15 : 43] No Christian husband or wife should ever be coerced into sex. Or into any sexual activity that they would feel uncomfortable with. That's definitely not allowed. Marriage is a love relationship.

With love for one another. Self-giving love. But sex is something that the Lord calls each spouse to freely give to the other. And did you notice as we had the chapter read there.

That in the biblical model there is this mutuality all through the teaching. This was being written in a culture where sex being consensual was certainly not a given idea. But here everything Paul says of the husband.

He says of the wife. And of the wife he says of the husband. In verse 3. And then in verse 4 if you just have a look. He says 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. And the physical intimacy is an expression of love.

[16 : 47] And self-giving that they're called to in all of life together. Paul is saying to married couples. Don't give up. And if you have given up. And the gap in the beds got wider.

To hear Paul saying communicate about that. And seek to come together again. In verse 6 he makes one concession. He says I'll make one concession.

And he explains that's the one he says in verse 5. That there may be times when by mutual consent. And for a time. In other words for a limited time.

You might stop having sex. So that you can devote yourselves to prayer. And then he says come together again after that. So that Satan will not tempt you.

Because of your lack of self-control. So we get from that. How important it is to pray. That Paul would say prayer is so important. You might stop having sex in marriage for a season.

[17 : 45] To pray more. But also it shows us that sex takes time. So that you might stop making time for sex.

So that you pray more for a season. But then you go back to making time for sex. If you're married. And if sex takes time. Implication there. We've got to make time for it.

If you're married. It's not going to work for the husband. To go and watch the football. And then go out for a couple of pints. And then get home. And then watch match of the day. And then head to the bedroom.

And say come on then love. It's business time. That's not. It's not going to work. Those of us who are married. Are encouraged here. To communicate to our spouses. A positive attitude.

To sexual intimacy. That will probably include. For most of us. Planning for it. Planning to go to bed early. Saying no to some things.

[18 : 41] In the diary. So that there is time. For sexual intimacy. There are lots of things. That can make it hard. For a married couple. To keep having sex. Tiredness.

Busyness. Bringing stress. From work home with you. Mental health issues. Depression. It's hard when the rest. Of the marriage relationship. Has got complicated.

When there are arguments. It's hard when you've got kids. When the kids are younger. And you're getting up early. And there's a lack of sleep. It's hard when kids are teenagers. And there's the lack of time.

Because you lose privacy. The kids are still awake at night. There are lots of barriers. But this chapter of the Bible. Is calling those of us who are married.

To take the time. And the thought. To invest. In sexual intimacy. With your spouse. And I guess for some of us. It will include. Just our spouse. Knowing.

[19 : 36] That we're trying for that. That we'd like that. Because sex. Is like the glue. That helps hold a marriage together. So that's our first point. Wisdom for the married. To enjoy more sex.

Then Paul turns. To address several different groups. With one key idea. So our second point. Is wisdom for different groups. To stay as you are. He addresses the unmarried.

Who want to be married. And then the married. Who maybe are thinking. It'd be better to be unmarried. So for the unmarried. He says. You're free. You could stay single.

You're free to marry. But you could stay single. So wisdom for the single. You could stay as you are. Have a look with me at verse 8. Now to the unmarried. And the widows.

I say. It is good for them. To stay unmarried. As I do. The writer Paul. Was a single man. He might have been a widower. Himself.

[20 : 33] And he's following. Jesus Christ. The most complete man. The most fulfilled man. Who ever lived. Nothing lacking in Jesus. And he was single. And Paul says.

That the single people. He's addressing. They are free to get married. If they want to. He says that in verse 9. But he's. Commending singleness. So have a look at verse 9.

He says. But if they cannot control themselves. They should marry. For it is better to marry. Than to burn. With passion. Now. We shouldn't just. Take that verse. On its own.

There is more. To getting married. Than. I got married. Because I was burning. With passion. Of course. You need to think. About whether you're ready. To love another person. Sacrificially.

And exclusively. And permanently. For life. Is this person. Going to be a good life. Partner. We should ask questions. Of a potential marriage partner.

[21 : 30] Ask ourselves. The questions. Do I think. That by marrying this person. We could do more. For Christ. And the gospel. Than we can on our own. Is this person.

Going to point me. To Jesus. Are they. Because of the spiritual. Trajectory. They're on. Are they going to help me. Trust Jesus more. And know him better. And love him more. So there's lots of.

Decision making. To go on. In marriage. But the principle. Here in verse 9. I think is just. That if you're serving Christ. And you're. You find you're attracted. To someone else.

Who's serving Christ. And them to you. And it's got to the point. Where it's becoming. A distraction. From getting on. With serving the Lord. You're burning with passion. For each other. Paul's saying.

You're free to get married. You could get married. He comes back. To the point. At the end of the chapter. He's talking about. Widows. At the end of the chapter. And in verse.

[22 : 27] 39. The only. Qualifier he gives. At the end of verse 39. Is. They have to be a Christian. He must belong to the Lord. The person you're marrying. But he's saying. There is freedom.

To get married. At the same time. Paul's judgment is. Between Jesus resurrection. And his return. It is good. To be single. He's going to help us.

Think about why. Next week. That's a big focus. In the second half. Of the chapter. But. At this stage. We just see his preference. In verse 7. He says. 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. So he's single. He sees that. As a gift from God. And he wishes.

Everyone had it. But some don't. Some are married. That's their gift. And then he says. That some people. Might want to exchange. Their gift. So then. There are married people.

- [23 : 22] Thinking. Maybe it would be better. Not to be married. And so notice. The change of language. In verse 10. He says. To the married. I give this command. Not I. But the Lord. And that's a pattern. Going on here. In the chapter. That. Lots of this. Is not in the realms. Of black and white. Right and wrong. Lots of what Paul's saying. It's wisdom. He's giving us wisdom.
- For life. As an apostle. With authority. But it's not. Kind of moral. Black and white issues. But verses 10 and 11. He's quoting the Lord Jesus. And it is a moral issue. So verse 10. To the married. I give this command. Not I. But the Lord. A wife. Must not separate. From her husband. But if she does. She must remain unmarried. Or else be reconciled. To her husband.
- And a husband. Must not divorce. His wife. Jesus says. That marriage. Is for life. I know that feels.
- [24 : 20] Very sensitive. For lots of us. Some of you. Will have been. Through divorce. Yourself. First hand. Some of you. Will be children. Of divorced parents. Or none in your family. I guess. If you're in that situation.
- You will know. How painful. Divorce is. And so we can see. Why. God hates divorce. When we see the pain. That a marriage breakdown. Causes. And there are thinking. Christians. Who disagree. Quite about. What the Bible says. About whether there are. Any exceptions. To the rule. That marriage is for life. And for my money.
- The Bible gives us. Two limited exceptions. To the command. Not to divorce. The first is from Jesus. In Matthew chapter 19. Where he says that. Divorce and remarriage. Are only permitted. Where there has been. Sexual immorality. By the spouse. And that in that. Catastrophic breach. Of the marriage commitment. Divorce is permitted.
- [25 : 15] Reconciliation. Would be a wonderful thing. But divorce is permitted. And if divorced. Remarriage is permitted. And here in this chapter. I think Paul adds. A second exception. Which is where. An unbeliever. A non-Christian spouse. Deserts. The Christian spouse. That the. I think that comes later. Other than that. The principle is.
- Married people. Should stay married. And to show us that. Paul then turns. To a challenging. Marriage situation. So that's our next group. You'll see on the sheets. Wisdom for the mixed marriage.
- And Paul's wisdom is. Do what you can. To make it work. So have a look with me. At verse 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. 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.
- [26 : 11] It might sound strange. That they were asking. That kind of question. In Corinth. But in the Old Testament. It was very clear. For God's people. That you weren't allowed. To marry someone.
- Who didn't worship. The God of the Bible. That was forbidden. For God's people. So now. In the. Early church. A new issue. Has come up. Which is. People have become Christians.
- After they've got married. And so they've married. As a non-Christian. To a. Non-Christian. They've become a Christian. And now they're wondering. Do I now need to divorce.
- My non-Christian husband. Or wife. And Paul says. No. Stay. Stay in that relationship. And do what you can. To try and make the marriage work.
- And last. He tells us why. In verse 14. These are words of reassurance. For the unbelieving husband. Has been sanctified. Through his wife.

[27 : 06] And the unbelieving wife. Has been sanctified. Through her believing husband. Otherwise. Your children would be unclean. But as it is.

They are holy. In other words. Don't worry. That being married. To a non-Christian. Will make you. Or your children. Unclean. In God's eyes.

You're holy. In God's eyes. Because you trust Jesus. And I take it. That the implication. At the end of verse 14. There's something about. Your children. Being treated.

As God's people. As trusting. Until they're old enough. To make that decision themselves. Don't worry. That one of the parents. Is not a Christian. And they're with you.

In a believing home. Because of your faith. And at least. In some sense. Your spouse. Is sanctified as well. Verse 14. They are. Kind of.

[28 : 01] Holy. In some sense. Probably meaning. That they. They benefit spiritually. From being married to you. Stay with them. Because. They're with you. And you're a believer. You know God.

And that will help them. That will. Work for good. In their life. So he says. If the non-Christian. Leaves the marriage. And deserts you. In verse 15.

You can let them go. You have to let them go. But he's giving hope. In verse 16. Of what good could come. If you stay married. Verse 16. How do you know wife. Whether you will save your husband.

Or how do you know husband. Whether you will save your wife. So Paul has addressed different groups. And there's this theme. That unites. What he says to them.

It's good to stay as you are. The single and widows. You're free to stay as you are. I wish all were like me. He says. The married. Stay as you are. You must stay as you are.

[28 : 56] Even if you're married to a non-Christian. And that reassurance from Paul. Depends. On having a security. That when God calls you to know him.

And to live for him. He doesn't call you to change your marital status. So that's our third point. Wisdom for the cold. To be free from worldly judgments. So in 17 to 24.

This next section. Paul makes that simple point. In different ways. That we should be free from how the world judges us. So look at verse 17. Nevertheless.

Each person. Should live as a believer. In whatever situation. The Lord has assigned to them. Just as God has called them. And then he applies that principle. To different situations.

First he applies it to Jewishness. Male circumcision. Was the mark of being Jewish. And he says. When you come to Christ. You don't have to become Jewish. If you weren't Jewish.

[29 : 54] And if you were Jewish. You don't have to become un-Jewish. You don't have to kind of undo that. In verse 19. He says. Circumcision is nothing. And uncircumcision is nothing.

Keeping God's commands is what counts. So what counts. Isn't circumcision. It's living for God. Who has called you. And then he repeats the point. In verse 20.

Each person. Should remain in the situation they were in. When God called them. So after Jewishness. The next social distinction. He applies that to. Is slavery.

He says in verse 21. Were you a slave when you were called? And then such kind words. Don't let it trouble you. Although if you can gain your freedom. Do so.

Paul is opposed to slavery. To someone being owned by someone else. So he's saying. If you can get freedom. Do that. But he's assuring slaves. That God doesn't view you any differently.

- [30 : 50] For being a slave. In fact in one sense. We're all free spiritually. In becoming Christians. Because we've been bought by God. And in another sense. We're all slaves.
- Because we're servants of Christ. But why might. A non-Jewish believer. Let it trouble them. That they're not Jewish. Or why might a slave. Who's a Christian.
- Let it trouble them. That they are. Not free. It's because these are the kind of things. That people would judge you for. In the first century. You got pigeonholed.
- Are you a slave or free? Are you circumcised or not circumcised? They were pigeonholed. And that fits in a chapter. Where Paul's talking to us about marriage and singleness.
- Because that's also true. Of whether or not you're married. Isn't it? That when we meet people. They'll make judgments about us. Depending on what job we do.
- [31 : 46] And whether we're married. Or we're single. Or we're widowed. Or we're married to a non-Christian. And Paul is saying. Don't let that trouble you. What matters is.
- Knowing God. And living for him. Otherwise we get enslaved. To other people's judgments of us. I wonder if you've ever been in a situation. Where you felt embarrassed to say.
- What your job is. Or the area you lived in. Or you felt embarrassed to say. That you're single. Or that you're married. Or that you're divorced.
- Well if we ever feel like that. We can take comfort from verse 23. Just have a look. He says. You were bought at a price. Do not become slaves.
- Of human beings. This is the glorious freedom. Of being a Christian. We heard Paul say of himself. In chapter 4. What you think of me. Doesn't matter.
- [32 : 41] He says to them. Even what I think of myself. Doesn't matter. Human judgments. Don't matter. Don't matter. And here he's saying. The Lord has called you. Jesus paid a great price for you.
- Don't let anyone. Make social judgments about you. Remember how God sees you. Washed. Sanctified. Justified. By his son. And remember.
- Living for him. Is what counts. So honor him. With your body. Let's pray together. Just a moment of quiet.
- To reflect on God's word. To us. Heavenly Father.
- We thank you. That your word. Gives us wisdom. For life. Father God. We pray. For the marriages. Across our church family. We pray.
- [33 : 49] That you will strengthen them. And you will give husbands and wives. Great wisdom. And love for one another. Whether a couple's in our church.
- For whom marriage. Is a real struggle today. We pray for them. That you'll give them the grace. They need to keep going. More than that.
- To grow in their love. For each other. And their trust in you. We pray for wisdom. For our unmarried. For all who are single.
- In our church. We pray for your blessing. And comfort. To those in our church family. Who grieve the loss. Of their husband or wife. We thank you for your goodness.
- To us. That you have called us to yourself. That you have redeemed us. That you have justified us. Through the cross of the Lord Jesus.
- [34 : 46] And we ask that. Whatever situation we are in. You would help us. To live lives. Renewed by your spirit. To the honor of your name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.