

## Now Concerning Virgins

*"I have no commandment of the Lord: but I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be trustworthy ..."* (1 Cor. 7:25).

With these words Paul introduces a subject which he does not specifically deal until some time later. His diversion from advice "*concerning virgins*" comes about as he lays groundwork for the conclusions which he will offer them.

The advice concerning virgins would not be a "*commandment of the Lord*": a hard and fast rule to which obedience would bring eternal joy and disobedience would result in eternal sorrow. There was a principle involved the very creation of woman which would be set aside should such be the case. When God made man and saw he was without a help meet, He said, "*It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make a help meet for him*" and thus woman was created (Gen. 2:24). That is an eternal truth which even Paul reverted back to with instructions to younger widows: "*I desire therefore that the younger widows marry, bear children ...*" (1 Tim. 5:14). The instructions concerning virgins would be advice: pure and simple, advice based upon the "*distress that is upon us*" (1 Cor. 7:26). Do not make the mistake of confusing "*commandment of the Lord*" with "*inspiration of the Lord*." The two are not the same. Paul wrote as one that had obtained mercy of the Lord to be trustworthy and thus was "*inspired*." His advice was "either/or," but sound advice doubtlessly from God who knew what was best for His creatures.

So, before he gives specific advice about virgins, he deemed it necessary to write concerning "*the (present) distress*" which affected God's people. What that particular distress was Paul did not elaborate about. The general persecutions against Christians from the Roman government was not full blown when this letter was written (about A.D. 57). True, Paul had suffered imprisonment in Philippi four or five years earlier at the hand of Roman authorities (Acts 16:21-31). And while city authorities had joined in persecuting Paul, those efforts were generally at the instigation of Jewish rulers (Acts 17:7-9). In fact Gallio, procounsel of Achaia, had dismissed the Jewish charges against Paul there in Corinth (Acts 18:12-15). Most of persecutions and suffering Christians had experienced at the time of this Corinthian letter therefore came from the hands of Jews. Still, an ill wind was blowing. Just a short while after Paul wrote these Corinthians, Demetrius and fellow silversmiths provoked an uproar in Ephesus because their craft was endangered. While honest about their charge against Paul, they stirred the prejudices and emotions of Ephesians with the charge that Paul

persuaded much people saying, "*there are no gods, what are made with hands*" and there was danger that "*the temple of the great goddess Diana be made of no account ...*" (Acts 19:23-27). Any discerning person could perceive that as the gap widened between Jews and Christians, the Roman government, which first viewed Christians as just a sect among Judaism (a legal religion), would perceive the two were not the same and Christians would be regarded an "illegal" religion under Roman authority.

So, whatever the "*present distress*" was, it would prove to bring trials and cares to Christians which would be intensified should those Christians be married. Thus the advice, "*It is good for a man to be as he is. Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife. But shouldest thou marry, thou hast not sinned, and if a virgin marry, she has not sinned*" (1 Cor. 7:26-28). "*Yet, such shall have tribulation in the flesh; and I would spare you*" (1 Cor. 7:28). That tribulation would result because men with wives or women with husbands would be divided, torn between allegiance to the Lord and concerns about the fate and well being of their mate.

Paul's instructions in these relationships was not designed to cast a snare upon believers, but to help them weather the trials they would experience in that "*distress.*" Yet, while they would be better able to stand unencumbered with a mate, God's words still rang true: "*It is not good that the man should be alone.*"

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