

The Basis for Decision-Making

This passage is the “very hub,” the theological foundation of all that is said about the marriage discussion.

What is the main point?

Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him, 17.

Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him, 20.

Brothers, each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to, 24.

What does it mean?

What does it mean to be “called” here?

This is the key term in this passage, the verb and noun occur 9 times

The verb is found four other times (1:9; 7:15; 10:27; 15:9), the noun once (1:26) and the adjective three times (1:1, 2, 24).

Paul's normal use of this word refers to God's efficacious call of persons to salvation (Rom 11:29; Eph 1:18; 4:1, 4; Phil 3:14; 2 Thess 1:11; 2 Tim 1:9).

No where in the Bible is this word used with reference to one's occupation or station in life, unless you are a prophet or apostle.

I'm sure as you live and breathe, if you listened to what I just said, it would cause a few eyebrows to be raised.

What is Paul saying?

The call to salvation has created such a radical change in one's relationship with God that one does not need to change any other relationship or circumstance in life.

God wants you to seek to live out the reality of your changed relationship with God wherever you were when you were called.

The call to salvation is a call to be changed in whatever situation you find yourself in, not to change your situation.

Salvation is not where God becomes your father and fixes every situation so it is easy or better for you.

Salvation is where God changes you to be conformed to the image of Christ.

For the one called to be like Christ, God's salvation is not salvation from bad or unpleasant conditions. It is salvation from sinful habits and attitudes, so that in whatever situation you are in, you can find the peace and joy of becoming like Christ.

Bloom where you are planted!

Notice the universality of this principle

Each one (3x)

This is the rule I lay down in all the churches

Are there any exceptions?

Two illustrations

Ethnicity and social status

Ethnicity, 7:18, 19

In the Greco-Roman culture, being circumcised was considered barbaric and uncultured. Some Jews considered becoming "uncircumcised." Contrarily, in some churches with larger Jewish populations, there was pressure for Gentiles to become circumcised (Galatians).

Under the New Covenant, circumcision was irrelevant. It didn't make one any more or less spiritual (Gal 5:6).

What matters now to the believer is obedience to God's commands, 7:19b. THIS IS THE CHANGE THAT NEEDS TO TAKE PLACE.

Paul is not saying you can't change, he is saying it is not the most important thing.

Social Status, 7:21-23

Slavery in the Greco-roman world was not parallel to slavery in the American History.

Slaves were subject to abuses and they were a lower social class, although some actually had it quite well.

Paul is saying; Don't regard your slavery as a lesser social class. The person who is a slave to men is "Christ's freedman." He is free in Christ.

Would you rather be free in Christ from sin and its power and be enslaved to another human, or be a slave to sin and be a free person?

This person is free to live out the reality of his transformed character in Christ as a slave.

But there is an exception allowed: If you can gain your freedom, do so. If the opportunity presents itself, do so.

Principle restated 7:23, 24.

Paul's principles for Christian choices.

The most important thing is not changing your circumstances; it is being changed in your circumstances, living out the reality of a transformed life in whatever circumstances you find yourself.

This is not to say that changing circumstances is altogether wrong. It is not the priority of the believer. In some cases, it might be sinful to change, but unless your occupation is inherently sinful, it is not necessary in order to fulfill your calling in salvation.

Yet, if one can change his circumstances and not violate God's commands, it is acceptable to do so, but certainly not the priority of a believer's life.

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So what?

The principle is change me to be like Christ. Help me to live out the reality of Christ's transforming grace in the pot that I am planted.

Not change my spouse...

Not change my boss...

Not change my health...

Not change my body...

Not change my church, my pastor, my deacon...

Not change my job...

Not change gas prices...

Not change my retirement benefits...

The principle is "Oh God, change me!"

I wonder if you've ever thought about how much you need to be changed?

Often reflected in what you pray.

I'm so complacent, I'm so proud I don't even think of areas I need to grow in. I'm so apathetic to the things of God.

Yet, if one can change his circumstances and not violate God's commands, it is acceptable to do so as long as the focus is on personal change and growth.